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Final Record of Decision

For the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan

Lincoln, Sanders, and Flathead Counties, Montana and Bonner and Boundary Counties, Idaho

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Introduction

This final Record of Decision (ROD) documents my decision and rationale for approving the revised Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan (Plan). This revised Plan describes desired conditions, objectives, standards and guidelines, and land suitability for project and activity decision making and will guide all resource management activities on the Forest for the next 10 to 15 years. It is part of the long-range resource planning framework established by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning of 1974 (RPA), the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), and the 2012 Revision of the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan.

I issued a draft decision for the revised Plan, subject to the pre-decisional administrative review process (objection process) as described in Subpart B of 36 CFR 219, on September 27, 2013. Thirty-eight objections were submitted per the objection procedures at 36 CFR sections 219.54 (c) or 219.56 (a). After Reviewing Officer Jim Peña's review of objections and participation in an objection resolution meeting, he received a new job and Greg Smith was delegated as the new Reviewing Officer. Reviewing Officer Greg Smith issued his written response on September 8, 2014. The response of the reviewing officer is the final decision of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (36 CFR 219.57 (b)(3)). All objection letters and responses are available in the project record.

This final ROD, the errata to the final environmental impact statement (EIS), the final version (2015) of the revised Plan, and the planning record incorporate all the reviewing officer's instructions. I have assessed the additional information provided per his instructions and find them to be within the range of environmental effects analyzed in the final EIS.

Forest Setting

The Kootenai National Forest (KNF or "Forest") is located in the northwest corner of Montana and includes about 2.2 million acres of public land. The Forest administers the entire proclaimed Kootenai and a portion of the Kaniksu National Forest. The KNF is divided into five ranger districts: Rexford, Fortine, Three Rivers, Libby, and Cabinet.

Two large rivers, the Kootenai and the Clark Fork, along with several smaller rivers and their tributaries, are major features of the Forest. The Whitefish Range, Purcell Mountains, Bitterroot Range, Salish Mountains, and Cabinet Mountains are all part of the rugged terrain radiating from the river valleys. In the north-central part of the Forest, the land is more open with gently rolling forested hills lying in the shadows of the Whitefish Range.

The KNF contains some of the most diverse and productive forests in the Northern Region of the Forest Service. It is the home of many plant and animal species, and it provides a diversity of aquatic and terrestrial habitat. Grizzly bear, Canada lynx, gray wolf, and bull trout are some of these species.

For over a century, these productive lands have contributed to the local and regional supply of forest products in response to national demands. These products include lumber, house logs, pulpwood, posts and poles, and firewood. In addition to the economic value of the timber resource, timber harvest is used to move vegetation towards desired conditions, improve watershed condition, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce wildfire risk through reduced fuel loads. Timber harvest also provides jobs and income in logging and manufacturing of wood products.

The KNF also contains lands rich with minerals. Developing mineral resources, especially gold, silver, lead, zinc, and copper, is part of the history of northwestern Montana and is tied to the

settlement of the area in the mid-1800s. Development of these resources has provided local jobs and income and provided a supply of these minerals in response to public demand.

The principal population centers within the KNF are Libby, Troy, Eureka, and Trout Creek, Montana. Smaller communities that have social, economic, and historic ties to the KNF include Rexford, Fortine, Trego, Stryker, the Yaak community, Noxon, and Trout Creek. The nearest large urban areas, Spokane, Washington, and the Flathead Valley in Montana, have a social and economic influence on the local communities. The majority of land administered by the KNF is located in Lincoln and Sanders counties in Montana. Smaller portions of land are also found in Flathead County in Montana, and Boundary and Bonner counties in Idaho.

Abundant recreation opportunities exist in the KNF. Visitors come from across the nation and Canada, as well as Spokane and local communities, to fish and boat the numerous rivers and lakes. Other popular recreation activities include hiking, biking, sightseeing, hunting, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, recreational prospecting, snowmobiling, skiing, and gathering forest products. Recreation is important to the local economy and is a major reason people choose to live in this area.

The landownership pattern in and near the KNF enhances collaborative planning and partnership opportunities. The Forest is within and/or encompasses portions of the wildland urban interface, private, state, county, or other federal land, as well as rural communities and populations centers. People of different backgrounds and values, but with shared interests in forest management, work together with the Forest Service to manage the resources in ways that consider all values and uses of the Forest.

Other distinctive features of the KNF are described in chapter 1 of the Plan.

Land and Resource Management Planning

The 1987 Forest Plan and Forest Plan Revision

The 1987 Forest Plan (1987 Plan) has provided a framework for management of all forest resources; including recreation, timber, water resources, and wildlife habitat, for the last 27 years. As forest practices, recreation uses, and species-based knowledge have evolved, the plan has been amended. The 1987 Plan, as amended, continues to provide measures to protect species and habitat while providing for recreational uses, generation of forest products, and development of mineral resources. The monitoring and evaluation reports indicate that implementation of the plan has protected soils, treated weeds, provided habitat for threatened and endangered species, and generated forest products. The Forest continues to have a diversity of plant and wildlife species, while providing for multiple uses.

Plan revision was initiated based on legal requirements and significant changes that had occurred in conditions and demands since the 1987 Plan went into effect. The Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) (2003) documents the need to establish or change forest plan management direction. Revision is also warranted because the 1987 Plan is beyond the 10 to 15 year duration provided by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) (16 U.S.C. 1606(e) (5) (A)).

The need for revision also comes from new public issues, new desires, and new expectations of public land and resource management. Topics of specific interest to the KNF public include forest access, recreation, inventoried roadless areas (IRAs), fire, timber management, soils, aquatic species, and wildlife habitat, as well as vegetation and watershed restoration.

The Revised Forest Plan

The final EIS and revised Plan were developed according to the NFMA, its implementing regulations at 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 219; the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA); the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations at 40 CFR 1500–1508; and the Forest Service NEPA regulations at 36 CFR 220. According to transition language of the 2012 Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.17(b)(3), the responsible official may elect to use the provisions of the prior planning regulations (1982 Planning Rule, dated September 30, 1982, and as amended) to prepare plan amendments and revisions. For this revision of the Plan, I have elected to follow the provisions of the planning regulations in effect prior to May 9, 2012, referred to collectively in this document as the 1982 Planning Rule. References in this ROD refer to the 1982 Planning Rule version of 36 CFR unless indicated differently in the citation.

The final EIS discloses the environmental consequences of the alternative management strategies considered and describes how these alternatives respond to issues and concerns raised during public participation processes.

Nature of Forest Plan Decisions

The nature of forest plan decisions is outlined in the NFMA. A forest plan provides overall guidance for the management of National Forest lands. It is based on law, science, and input from citizens. The forest plan establishes goals, desired conditions, objectives, standards, and land suitability to assure coordination of multiple uses (e.g., outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, and wilderness) and sustained yield of products and services. Similar to local government land-use zoning, the forestwide and management area direction in the forest plan are used to guide future management decisions and set consistent expectations for the types of activities permissible on the forest.

This forest plan decision is strategic in nature, does not make a commitment to the selection of any specific project, and does not dictate day-to-day administrative activities needed to carry on the Forest Service's internal operations (e.g., personnel matters, law enforcement, or organizational changes). The forest plan programmatic management direction will be implemented through the design, execution, and monitoring of site-specific activities such as relocating a trail, conducting a prescribed burn, or harvesting timber. The decisions for these activities will be consistent with the strategic decisions made in the revised Plan and are subject to separate analysis under the NEPA.

Tribal, Agency, and Public Involvement and Collaboration

A variety of opportunities for meaningful dialogue and public participation were provided throughout the plan revision process, including the initial ecological and socioeconomic sustainability assessments, development, and finalization of the plan, and the consideration of effects in the final EIS. As explained in chapter 1 of the final EIS, the Plan is based in part on public involvement and collaboration over the course of many years.

In late 2000, the KNF began working on revision of the 1987 Plan under the 2000 Planning Rule. In April 2002, the Forest published a notice of intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register*, announcing the revision of the Land Management Plan with a 12-month public comment period.

From April 2002 to May 2004, the KNF hosted public meetings, open houses, and field trips, and held meetings with county commissioners. Approximately 15 informational and comment meetings took place in and around the local communities during the scoping process, which

started in April 2002, with the NOI in the *Federal Register* and ended in May 2004. The Forest continued briefings and meetings with tribes; Congressional representatives; state, county, and local elected officials; other agencies; and interested groups as the revision process continued through the ROD.

In addition, the KNF hosted approximately 75 workgroup meetings from August 2003 to September 2005. These meetings were held in communities within the KNF and the workgroups focused on the geographic areas (GAs) surrounding each of these communities. The purpose of these workgroup meetings was to: 1) share information about the revision topics; 2) collaboratively discuss and develop desired conditions for each of the revision topics within the workgroups' GAs; 3) gain an understanding of the issues and appreciation of others' viewpoints; and 4) discuss Starting Option maps and potential changes to suggest to the forest supervisor.

On May 12, 2006, the Forest released the Proposed Land Management Plan under the 2005 Planning Rule. Open houses and public meetings were held to share the Proposed Land Management Plan, Comprehensive Evaluation Report, and other documents for the 120-day public comment period. Public comments on the proposed Plan were analyzed and summarized in a report (the Analysis of Public Comment Report, March 2007). Based on public and agency comments, the revision team began development of the final revised Plan. A court injunction (March 30, 2007) resulted in suspension of forest plan revision activities under the 2005 Planning Rule. The 2008 Planning Rule was released in April of 2008 and forest plan revision resumed under that Rule. A final revised Plan release was anticipated for winter of 2009 when a court ruling invalidated the 2008 Planning Rule in June 2009. The 2000 Planning Rule was reinstated in December of 2009, with transition provision allowing the Forest Service to follow the procedures of the 1982 Planning Rule. The Forest issued a second NOI in March 2010 to revise the forest plan using the 1982 procedures under the 2000 Planning Rule. The 2012 Planning Rule became effective May 9, 2012, with similar transition provisions allowing the Forests to continue revision using the 1982 procedures. All the public comment received on the various forest plan revision products over the life of the Plan revision were used in developing the draft Plan and draft EIS released in January of 2012.

In addition to the open houses, workgroup meetings, and individual group, agency, and local government meetings held as requested throughout the planning process, the forest hosted the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle Zone (KIPZ) website (http://www.fs.usda.gov/kipz) providing additional access to the planning effort documentation. This site linked to the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forest webpages with maps and GIS data providing additional detailed information for interested publics.

The initial 90-day comment period for the draft EIS was extended an additional 30 days through May 7 of 2012. Comments received during this 120-day comment period have been either incorporated or answered in the final EIS accompanying this record of decision.

As stated in the 2010 NOI to revise the forest plan, the KNF elected to follow the pre-decisional administrative review process (objections) outlined in 36 CFR 219. Thirty-eight objections meeting the objection filing requirements at 36 CFR 219.54(c) were considered by the reviewing officer. Also, 39 requests from interested persons were received and granted. Comments received from six individuals did not meet filing requirements but were forwarded to me and my staff for consideration while making this final decision.

After the initial review of the written objections received for the revised Plan and final EIS, Reviewing Officer Jim Peña decided to hold a meeting in Libby, Montana on April 30, 2014, to have additional engagement with objectors and interested persons on proposed remedies for four

areas of concern: local government coordination, Wild and Scenic River eligibility determinations, Recommended Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas, and Management Indicator Species. Approximately 34 objectors and co-objectors and 8 interested persons participated in the meeting, either in person or by phone. All objectors and interested persons participating in the meeting were given an opportunity to speak on each of the issue areas. The purpose of the meeting was not to re-state the contents of the objection letters or to bring forward information not previously submitted, but rather focused on a discussion of the remedies under consideration specifically for those four issue areas. During the meeting objectors helped to clarify understanding of the issues and suggested improvements to remedies proposed for consideration in the final response to objections. Interested persons provided additional thoughts. The feedback received was very helpful for our consideration of the issues and potential remedies.

All objections and the final agency response can be found on the forest website at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/kootenai.

Decision Summary

I have reviewed the alternatives, read the public comments, and after considering the effects to the ecological, social, and economic environment as described in the final EIS and associated errata, I have selected the primary management direction and allocations of Alternative B Modified, with adjustments per the instructions from the Pre-decisional Reviewing Official, for the Kootenai National Forest (KNF) Land and Resource Management Plan (Plan). However, in consideration of public concerns in the vicinity of the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area, I'm also incorporating allocation components of Alternative A (no action) and Alternative D in two specific areas as described below and on page 11.

My decision approves the goals, desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, timber suitability, management area direction, and monitoring and evaluation direction as described in Alternative B Modified. It also includes the recommendations of wilderness allocations for Congressional consideration – Scotchman Peaks, Roderick, and the Cabinet Additions. However, in a change from the August 2013 draft decision, I'm assigning the Whitefish Divide area to Management Area 5a–Backcountry Non-motorized Year-round, as described in Alternative D.

At this time, I am not taking any action regarding wilderness recommendations for the Ten Lakes Montana Wilderness Study Act area (Alternative A, no action). I will continue to defer to the 1985 Legislative Report to Congress, which recommends 26,000 acres of the 34,000-acre Ten Lakes Study Area for wilderness designation. Until Congress makes a determination, the entire 34,000-acre area will be managed, subject to existing rights, to maintain its existing wilderness character and potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The revised Plan emphasizes moving towards desired conditions and contributing to ecological, social, and economic sustainability. It establishes a framework for future multiple-use management, setting programmatic direction that serves as a gateway for compliance with environmental laws at the site-specific project level. Approval of the revised Plan does not require implementation of any site-specific management actions, but rather provides the framework for future decision-making.

The final EIS includes the site-specific analysis to support my decision to restrict over-snow motorized and mechanized uses in the management areas where these uses are not considered suitable for meeting the desired conditions. In addition to approving the programmatic direction

of the revised Plan, this record of decision authorizes an accompanying closure order* as per 36 CFR 261 Subpart B to align the allowed uses within the management area direction as follows:

- Restrict mechanized use on 96,500 acres and 126 miles of trail in Research Natural Areas and the Scotchman Peaks, Roderick, and Cabinet Additions recommended wilderness
- Restrict over-snow motorized use on 42,200 acres and 47 miles of trail in Research Natural Areas and the Scotchman Peaks, Roderick, and Cabinet Additions recommended wilderness (most of the Scotchman Peaks and Cabinet Additions are currently under the 2001 order prohibiting motorized use)
- Release existing over-snow motorized closure on 15,600 acres (0.7 percent of the KNF), in areas not recommended for wilderness in this decision, that were closed based on the 1987 FP recommended wilderness
- Restrict the use of hand-held motorized equipment in management areas in the Scotchman Peaks, Roderick, and Cabinet Additions recommended wilderness except for administrative use.

(*Some commenters expressed concerns about the Plan's effect on road access so I want to note my decision does not change current motorized route designations. The KNF completed non-winter motor vehicle use designations as required by Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212) in 2009. Additional site-specific NEPA analysis would be required for any future motor vehicle use map (MVUM) designation changes.)

I have considered how the revised Plan and site-specific prohibition responds to public comments, internal management concerns, and national direction and policy. My decision is based on the management direction in the revised Plan, the analysis of effects disclosed in the final EIS and associated errata, and the planning record in its entirety. The decision components are fully supported by the environmental analysis documented in the final EIS, as required by law and regulation. This decision applies only to National Forest System land on the KNF. It does not apply to any other Federal, State, or private lands, although the effects of these lands and the effects of my decision on lands surrounding the KNF are also considered.

Components of the Programmatic Decision

There are six fundamental components of the programmatic decision made in the plan revision. The following sections discuss these components of the decision in detail.

1. Establishment of Forestwide Multiple-Use Goals, Objectives, Desired Conditions, and Quantities of Goods and Services (36 CFR 219.11(b))

Goals, objectives, and desired conditions are defined in chapter 1 of the revised Plan. The "quantities of goods and services" are defined in the objectives. Chapter 2 of the revised Plan lists the forestwide goals, objectives, and desired conditions. Chapters 3 and 4 of the revised Plan lists desired conditions by management area and by geographic area, respectively.

Part of my rationale for selecting Alternative B Modified is because of how it will achieve the goals, objectives, and desired conditions. Although the goals, objectives, and desired conditions apply to all the alternatives, each alternative achieves them in different ways and to different degrees, depending on the emphasis. I find that Alternative B Modified best achieves the goals, objectives, and desired conditions by providing for the variety of uses people told me were important, and by best recognizing the past management history and capabilities of the KNF. Alternative B Modified provides for active management and timber harvest while moving vegetation towards desired conditions for improved resiliency. Alternative B Modified also

provides areas with passive management and limited access. This balance between active and passive management is described in the effects analysis of the final EIS.

2. Establishment of Forestwide Standards and Guidelines (36 CFR 219.13 to 219.27)

Forestwide management requirements (standards and guidelines) do not vary by alternative, because they were considered the 'baseline' design criteria that ensure resources are managed in a sustainable manner. They were developed based on scientific and public input. The standards and guidelines were carefully crafted to strike a balance between providing assurances that management direction is followed, while allowing managers flexibility in the case of site-specific circumstances. Standards are limitations on actions or thresholds that are not to be exceeded. Guidelines are requirements that must be followed unless a different management action achieves the same intent as the guideline.

After careful review, I believe that the standards and guidelines provide sufficient requirements for management, provide for resource protection, and reflect the intent of the new Plan. To simplify the planning document and to keep it up to date, laws, policies, Forest Service Manual, and Forest Service Handbook direction or other regional directives are incorporated by reference from the original source and are not duplicated in the plan. I find that the forestwide standards and guidelines were developed in an interdisciplinary manner, and provide for achievement of the revised Plan's goals, objectives, and desired conditions.

3. Establishment of Management Area (MA) Direction (Multiple-use Prescriptions) with Associated Standards and Guidelines (36 CFR 219.11(C))

The revised Plan provides direction for management areas that have specific management direction that differs from the general forest. The Plan designates seven management area (MA) themes across the KNF: Wilderness (Designated, Recommended, and Wilderness Study Area); Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers; Special Areas (botanical, geological, historical, recreational, scenic, or zoological); Research Natural Areas (RNAs); Backcountry; General Forest; and Primary Recreation Areas. The MAs span a continuum of management emphasis from a passive approach with little human-caused change to more active management with substantially more human-caused change designed to sustain the social, economic, and ecological attributes of the Forest. The management area prescriptions include specific standards and guidelines, which are described in chapter 3 of the revised Plan. The management area allocations were the primary difference between the three action alternatives. Based on public input, there were several important changes in the management area allocations between the Alternative B (the draft Plan), Alternative B Modified, and this final ROD (the revised Plan).

The forest received several comments and objections regarding the three MA5 allocations. These backcountry MAs consist largely of Inventoried Roadless Areas with primitive and semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities. Dividing the backcountry areas between MA5a (non-motorized year-round) and MA5b (motorized year-round), with MA5c (motorized winter) added was a change from the 2006 Starting Option based on public input to address the need for preliminary identification of suitable motorized or non-motorized recreation seasons of use. Management area allocation variations were analyzed across the alternatives in the EIS. However, many commenters have continued to request changes between one allocation and another, either to prohibit motorized recreation or allow motorized recreation, in various specific locations. Often one commenter's request is in direct conflict with another commenter's request (or with forest resource considerations) demonstrating ongoing disagreement over motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities common to National Forest land management.

I've considered the public input and the interdisciplinary evaluation of resource effects and find my decision provides appropriate allocations along the range of recreation opportunities. Ongoing and future site-specific travel management planning subsequent to approval of the revised Plan will either be consistent with these allocations or amend the Plan as needed as the Forest continues to strive toward balancing recreation opportunities with other natural resource management considerations.

Management Area Allocations

Land within the KNF may be assigned to more than one management area. For example the Ross Creek Research Natural Area (MA 4) is nested within the Scotchman Peak recommended wilderness area (MA 1b). In such cases, the most restrictive plan direction would apply to the area of overlap.

Table 1 describes the management area allocations included in my decision. See the map for all MA allocation acreages and locations on the web at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/kootenai.

Table 1. KNF Management Areas and Acreages

MA	Management Area Name	Acres*	Percent
1a	Wilderness	93,700	4.2
1b	Recommended Wilderness	86,800	3.9
1c	Wilderness Study Areas	34,100	1.5
2	Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers	41,000	1.8
3	Botanical, Geological, Historical, Recreational, Scenic or Zoological Areas	29,100	1.3
4	Research Natural Areas	9,800	0.4
5a	Backcountry – Non-motorized Year-round	246,800	11.1
5b	Backcountry – Motorized Year-round (Summer only on designated routes/areas)	169,800	7.7
5c	Backcountry – Motorized Winter, Non-motorized Summer	86,500	3.9
6	General Forest	1,408,800	63.5
7	Primary Recreation Areas	12,900	0.6
Total Acres		**2,219,100**	

*Displayed acres are based on a single management area designation. Where management areas overlap (e.g., MA2 within MA1b), the following hierarchy is used in the table 1 acre summary: MA1a, MA4, MA1c, MA1b, MA2, MA3, and MA7. There are no overlaps in MA 5 or MA 6.

As part of the decision, I am designating additional special management areas, including RNAs, special areas, and identifying additional eligible wild and scenic rivers.

RNAs

I am designating three additional RNAs: Doonan Peak (504 acres), Huson Peak (731 acres), and Seven Point Genetical (1,991 acres). The Doonan Peak RNA includes an extensive, well-developed distributional overlap of western larch, alpine larch, and their natural hybrids. Huson Peak and Seven Point Genetical RNAs both include viable stands of whitebark pine, providing a historic representation of the species for western Montana and Idaho. Establishment records will be completed after approval of the revised Plan.

Special Areas

I am designating 36 additional special areas and increasing the size of two existing special areas (see table 2). These additional special areas will be protected and managed for public use and enjoyment. They possess unique botanical, geological, historical, recreational, scenic, or zoological values. I am increasing the size of the Northwest Peak (8,533 acres) and Ten Lakes (8,403) scenic areas to incorporate the adjacent unique scenic values and improve manageability of the areas.

Table 2. Additional Designated Special Areas

Special Area Name	Recommended Acres	Values
494 Bedrock Meadow	35	Botanical
Bad Medicine	1,938	Zoological/Historical
Barnum Wetland	227	Botanical
Barron Creek	326	Historical
Bitterroot Point	126	Botanical/Historical
Callahan Historic Mining & Logging District	3,262	Historical
Cody Lakes	194	Botanical/Zoological
East Fork Bull River	109	Botanical
East Fork Pipe Creek	1,118	Geological
Falls Creek	42	Scenic/Geological
Flower Lake	16	Botanical
French Creek Cedars	131	Botanical
Gateway Prairie	2,147	Botanical
Halverson Face	47	Botanical
Hamilton Gorge	144	Geological
Kelsey Creek	53	Botanical
Kenelty Caves	87	Geological
Little North Fork Falls	6	Recreational/Historical
Lost Horse Fen	308	Botanical
Lower Sunday Creek Ecosystem	150	Botanical/Historical
Northwest Peak Scenic Area	8,533[1]	Scenic
Pete Creek	320	Botanical
Pinkham Falls	21	Historical/Geological
Rock Creek Meadows	186	Botanical
Rocky Fivemile Forest	214	Botanical
Ross Falls	44	Historical/Geological
Spar Springs	196	Geological
Spread Otis Creeks	382	Botanical
Stone Hill	760	Recreational/Geological
Sutton Falls	113	Historical/Geological

Special Area Name	Recommended Acres	Values
Swamp Mountain Meadows	45	Botanical
Ten Lakes Scenic Area	8,403[1]	Scenic
Tenmile Falls	187	Historical / Geological
Tepee Lake	46	Botanical
Terriault Pass	493	Geological
Vermilion Falls	99	Recreational/Historical
Vinal Lake	83	Historical/Botanical
Yaak Falls	44	Historical/Recreational
Total Acres	**30,635**	

[1] Existing special area that is increased in size

Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Forest has identified nine river or stream systems as eligible for wild and scenic designation. Five of these river systems (the Kootenai, Yaak, Bull, and Vermillion Rivers and Big Creek) were found eligible under the 1987 Plan. I will continue to manage these rivers, totaling 112.4 miles on NFS lands, as eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System. I am also recommending an additional 37.6 miles of river or creek as eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System. This includes segments of the Vinal Creek System, the West Fork Yaak River, Ross Creek, Callahan Creek, and two additional segments to the Bull River. The land surrounding these river and creek systems (generally ¼ mile on each side) is allocated to MA 2 (48,085 acres), with desired conditions, standards, and guidelines as described in chapter 3 to protect their free-flowing character, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values.

4. Establishment of Monitoring and Evaluation Requirements that Provide a Basis for Periodic Determination and Evaluation of the Effects of Management Practices (36 CFR 219.11(d) and 219.12(k))

The monitoring plan is described in chapter 5 of the revised Plan. Monitoring provides the feedback for the forest planning cycle by testing assumptions, tracking relevant conditions over time, measuring management effectiveness, and evaluating effects of management practices. Monitoring information should enable the Forests to determine if a change in plan components or other plan management guidance may be needed, forming a basis for continual improvement and adaptive management.

Implementation of the monitoring requirements in the 1987 Plan revealed shortcomings in the approach. The 1987 monitoring plan was overly detailed, prescriptive, and lacked flexibility. It focused on quantifying outputs rather than assessing how well the 1987 Plan was working. The revised Plan's monitoring program sets monitoring questions and indicators to help managers evaluate and assess the degree to which on-the-ground management is maintaining or making progress toward achieving the desired conditions and objectives.

Every monitoring question links to one or more goal, desired condition, or objective. However, the monitoring program strives to be realistic in terms of budget and capacity and does not include a monitoring question for every plan component. On a biennial basis, an interdisciplinary team will evaluate forest plan monitoring data and relevant broad-scale monitoring information in terms of movement toward desired conditions and efficacy of management treatments. The

biennial Monitoring Evaluation Report will summarize this evaluation and make recommendations for adjusting management action as necessary.

I have placed emphasis on monitoring and I am confident that the monitoring requirements will provide the information to evaluate implementation of the revised Plan and will facilitate adapting management in response to results and new information.

5. Recommendations to Congress for Additions to the Wilderness Preservation System (36 CFR 219.17(a))

Public opinion regarding wilderness recommendation varies widely. Many people favor recommending additional areas for wilderness while many others object to any recommendations. The Lincoln and Boundary County commissioners do not support additional recommended wilderness in the revised Plan. The Bonner County Commissioners support wilderness designation for the Scotchman Peaks area.

After considering the public value of wilderness and reviewing the suitability evaluations in the FEIS, I am recommending to Congress the addition of 89,300 acres for addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System. This includes recommending Scotchman Peaks at 35,900 acres, Roderick at 23,500 acres, and the addition of 29,900 acres to the existing Cabinet Mountain Wilderness.

My recommendation is similar to what was included in the 1987 plan for additions to the wilderness preservation system, although some of the boundaries and locations have changed under Alternative B Modified based on public input during the plan revision effort. I feel this amount of recommended wilderness, paired with the 93,700 acres of the designated Cabinet Mountain Wilderness, provides an appropriate amount of area to be managed for wilderness values in balance with managing for other desired conditions across the Kootenai National Forest.

The Scotchman Peaks and additions to the Cabinet Mountains have been managed as recommended wilderness since the 1987 Plan was approved. These areas have attributes that are fitting as wilderness. The Roderick area was added as recommended wilderness in Alternative B Modified because interest in this area was supportive from a local collaborative group. This area ranked high for capability, availability, and need in the wilderness evaluation (see Appendix C of the final EIS). The Revision Topic 6 discussion on pages 21–23 of this ROD provides further rationale for this decision.

This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. The Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation.

The draft ROD included recommending a portion of the Whitefish Divide (16,000 acres) area as wilderness to provide consistency with management on the adjacent Flathead National Forest. The greater Whitefish Divide area on the Flathead National Forest has support for recommended wilderness from a collaborative group representing diverse interests. However, due to lack of local public support on the Kootenai National Forest in conjunction with ongoing travel management planning in the area, I have decided not to recommend the Whitefish Divide area for wilderness designation at this time.

Therefore, per the Reviewing Official’s instructions and the consideration of these public concerns, I will defer making any changes regarding recommended wilderness in the Ten Lakes and Whitefish Divide area until travel management planning initiated under the 2007 Montana

Wilderness Study Area (MWSA) Settlement Agreement has been completed. I will carry forward the 1985 Ten Lakes MWSA Final Report and Proposal to recommend 26,000 acres of the 34,000 acre Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area as wilderness as analyzed under Alternative A. And I will allocate the Whitefish Divide area to management area 5a as analyzed under Alternative D. This decision falls within the scope and context of the environmental effects disclosed in the final EIS.

The revised Plan direction for the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area will continue to require the Forest to maintain the area's wilderness character as it existed in 1977, as well as maintain its potential for inclusion in the wilderness system as legislatively directed under the Montana Wilderness Study Act (final 2015 Plan page 49) while awaiting congressional action.

I have notified the Chief's Office of my intended action on wilderness study areas involved in the Forest plan Revision. Upon request of the Chief, an updated legislative proposal may be completed. The 1985 recommendation is a preliminary administrative wilderness study area recommendation which will receive further review and possible modification in the offices of the Chief, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. Final decisions on wilderness designation have been reserved by Congress to itself.

The discussion on pages 21–23 further describes my rationale around this important revision topic.

6. Determine Suitability And Potential Capability Of Lands For Resource Production (Timber And Grazing) (CFR 219.14 And 219.20)

There is some variation between the alternatives in acres suitable for timber production and acres suitable for grazing, based on MA allocation. Suitability for timber production and suitability for grazing are defined in part by management area standards and guidelines.

Alternative B Modified has 793,700 acres (36 percent of the Forest) suitable for timber production. This is less than Alternative D, but more than Alternative C. This is a large change from the 1987 Plan as originally written, which was 1,263,000 acres. However, with forest plan amendments over the previous 26 years, including INFISH and the Grizzly Bear Access Amendment, lands suitable for timber production in the 1987 Plan were reduced to 739,300 acres (Alternative A). When compared to Alternative A, Alternative B Modified is slightly higher in acres suitable for timber production. I believe these acres represent areas where timber production is feasible, based on other resource requirements and compatibility with management area desired conditions.

Suitability for grazing only varies by alternative by a few acres. Grazing suitability is driven mostly by areas capable of producing forage. The Kootenai is densely forested. Only 252,600 acres are capable of producing forage. Of this, approximately 149,000 acres are suitable for grazing, based on allotments and management area allocations.

Site-specific Decision to Restrict Over-snow Motor Vehicle Use and Mechanized Use

As described on pages 5 and 6 of this ROD, in addition to the programmatic forest plan decision, this ROD also authorizes a prohibition on motorized and mechanized use in RNAs and the Scotchman Peaks, Roderick, and Cabinet Additions revised Plan recommended wilderness areas.

I have included this decision to align uses with the desired conditions to provide non-motorized and non-mechanized opportunities for exploration, solitude, risk, challenge, and primitive recreation within the revised Plan recommended wilderness areas. Continuing the uses could

affect the wilderness character and potential for the areas we analyzed to be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Within RNAs, the purpose is to maintain undisturbed conditions for the purposes of non-manipulative research and education.

I have reviewed the analysis in the final EIS and errata which considers the number of acres and miles of trail which would not be available for motorized and mechanized use. This includes the effects to ecological resources such as watershed (final EIS page 198) and wildlife (final EIS page 234, 252, 271, 302, 327, 364–365, and the biological assessment) as well as effects to recreation opportunities in the access and recreation environmental consequences (final EIS beginning on page 416).

I recognize that motorized and mechanized recreation users also desire remote recreation areas that allow them the opportunity for exploration, solitude, risk, challenge, and primitive recreation via their recreation vehicle of choice (e.g., snowmobile or mountain bike) similar to non-motorized recreationists. This site-specific prohibition will reduce that opportunity on approximately 4 percent of the 2 million acre Forest, but I believe those opportunities can still be found within the MA5b and 5c backcountry management allocations (approximately 12 percent of the Forest).

Decisions Carried Forward

Three decisions that amended the 1987 Plan are retained. The revised Plan includes an explanation of the direction retained from each of these decisions and their associated biological opinions. Projects and activities implemented under the revised Plan must be consistent with the direction within these decisions. They include:

- Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH)—Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (USDA Forest Service, July 1995)
- Forest Plan Amendments for Motorized Access Management Within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones—Record of Decision (USDA Forest Service, November 2011)
- Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction—Record of Decision (USDA Forest Service, March 2007)

This retained direction (desired conditions, standards, and guidelines) can be found in appendix B of the revised Plan. Copies of the Records of Decision and associated biological opinions are available on the web at www.fs.usda.gov/main/kootenai/landmanagement/planning.

Rationale for Decision

Net Public Benefit

The 1982 National Forest Management Act (NFMA) implementing regulations (1982 regulations 36 CFR 219.1) state that forest plans must "...provide for multiple-use and sustained yield of goods and services from the National Forest System in a way that maximizes long-term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner."

I have considered the many competing public desires for uses of the KNF in the context of ecological diversity and ecosystem integrity. I am also mindful of economic difficulties of the counties surrounding the Forests and seek a decision that balances the need for resource conservation with one that contributes to the economic well-being of these communities.

I chose Alternative B Modified because, in my judgment, it maximizes the net benefit to the public by:

- Addressing all of the primary revision topics and needs for change identified in the 2003 Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS)
- Maintaining or enhancing diversity and productivity of the Forest
- Contributing to economic and social needs of people, cultures, and communities
- Providing sustainable and predictable levels of products and services
- Providing an emphasis on restoration of vegetation and watersheds to improve resistance and resiliency to disturbance
- Sustaining biological diversity and aid in conserving and recovering federally-listed species and other species with viability concerns
- Emphasizing maintaining diverse, high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities as well as a road and trail system that provides access to the KNF
- Providing the best mix of benefits to address the needs for change identified in the AMS
- Providing consistent direction at the forest level to assist managers in making project decisions at a local level
- Emphasizing adaptive management

My choice also considered how the revised Plan responded to public comments, internal management concerns, and national direction and policy.

Role of Budgets

Some commenters were concerned with the consideration of budget constraints when setting objectives in the revised Plan (e.g., determining the predicted timber harvest level objective). Our objectives in the Plan were developed to move towards a variety of desired conditions in the various resource areas. The desired conditions are unconstrained by budget, but the quantity or amount of each objective was based largely on our current and recent past budget levels because we expect future budgets to stay relatively flat or decrease. I believe it is misleading to portray unrealistic objectives considering this expectation. The revised Plan objectives are a realistic projection of what the KNF expects to accomplish annually over the life of the plan. The final EIS describes the effects on forest health and vegetation composition from management under current budget levels. Furthermore, if budget allocations increase or other funding opportunities arise, the revised Plan allows for an increase in outputs (e.g. developed recreation maintenance or timber volumes up to the allowable sale quantity (ASQ)).

Purpose and Need for Change – Revision Topics

Early in the plan revision process, a set of topics was developed to identify the need for changing the 1987 Plan. The list of topics was reviewed and validated at each step in the plan revision process. Revision topics represent a systematic framework for discussing the revised Plan. In addition, the revised Plan carries forward other management direction not identified as needing change or that needed only minor changes to achieve the multiple-use balance sought in this decision. Revision topics were used to develop alternatives.

Revision Topic 1 – Vegetation

The focus on vegetation during the revision process was largely due to concerns that the forest composition, structure, and pattern had shifted away from historical conditions to the extent that ecosystems, and the goods and services that they provide, may not be sustainable, especially in light of potential impacts from climate change. Commenters generally agree that vegetation objectives and standards should emphasize healthy forests. On the other hand, opinions differ widely on the definition of forest health and the means for improving health. Some people would like to see increased management to restore and improve vegetation. Others felt no restoration was needed, but we needed increased management. Still others felt the way to improve forest health is by doing less management and protecting areas from activities.

Vegetation management under the 1987 Plan focused primarily on timber production. The 1987 Plan contains very little direction on the desired conditions for vegetation and management approaches to achieve them. It did not recognize or address important natural disturbance processes as part of the ecosystem. The incorporation of broader ecological principles, including the role of fire as a disturbance process, was identified as a need for change in plan revision.

The revised Plan provides direction to improve vegetation conditions which will increase resistance and resiliency to disturbance, including climate change. The revised Plan contains desired conditions for forest composition, structure, density, and pattern and objectives for management activities that will move vegetation towards these conditions. Standards and guidelines protect components of vegetation, providing for diversity and habitat for terrestrial species.

Some commenters were concerned about providing increased protection for old growth. Some wanted a specific management area for old growth while others wanted to prohibit any timber harvest in old growth. The Forest has been managing old growth for decades. The 1987 Plan contained direction related to old growth and had a separate management area (MA13) for this resource. The revised Plan provides for protection and enhancement of old growth stands including desired conditions to increase the amount of old growth over the long term. Standards prohibit vegetation management activities that could decrease old growth. Guidelines allow timber harvest in old growth if it improves the resistance and/or resiliency of the stand while meeting the definitions for old growth. The revised Plan builds upon the decades of knowledge gained on the KNF from protecting old growth, retaining the mapped old growth, and managing this resource into the future.

The final EIS analyzes changes that may occur to forest composition, structure, landscape patterns of forest conditions; the resistance and resiliency of the forest to disturbances and stressors; and the ability of the forest vegetation to sequester carbon. This analysis provided a foundation for how terrestrial vegetation may influence other resources such as wildlife habitat, aquatic resources, timber production, and fire risk.

I believe Alternative B Modified, as represented in the revised Plan, provides the greatest potential to move forest composition, structure, and pattern toward desired conditions overall, while considering all other National Forest management resource values. Analysis presented in the final EIS indicates that Alternative B Modified makes the broadest improvements to vegetation composition and structure, although results are mixed by individual species and size classes. This is because Alternative B Modified has more acres allowing active management to improve vegetation conditions than Alternative C. And although Alternative D includes more acres allowing active management than Alternative B Modified, the emphasis is on maximizing timber harvest, with improving vegetation composition and structure as a secondary goal. Thus,

Alternative B Modified provides the best opportunity for improvement to vegetation condition. The amount of old growth is projected to increase under all alternatives, with the largest increase in Alternative B Modified.

Revision Topic 2 – Fire Risk

In order to restore and maintain the fire-adapted ecosystems on the Forest, wildland fire (both planned and unplanned ignitions) needs to be considered as a management tool. A substantial amount of acreage on the KNF is fairly remote in terms of road access. In many of these areas, it can be difficult or undesirable to use mechanical treatments to manage the vegetation to help achieve the desired forest conditions. Therefore, in these areas, it is especially important to consider when and where the use of fire is appropriate.

Since the 1987 Plan was written, much has been learned about the role fire plays as a disturbance process in western forest ecosystems. Fire suppression has changed the vegetation patterns, structure, and composition of forests. Therefore, the role fire plays in these ecosystems has also been altered. The altered forest composition, when coupled with additional structures and communities in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), results in conditions that need to be addressed by the revised Plan.

Under the 1987 Plan, most MAs allow the use of prescribed fire (planned ignitions). However, the use of natural, unplanned ignitions is fairly restrictive in the 1987 Plan Twelve MAs (5, 6, 13, 15–21, 23, and 24) have standards that do not allow the use of natural, unplanned ignitions and the acres that these MAs occupy is substantial, approximately 25 percent of the total acres on the KNF.

The revised Plan allows the use of prescribed fire and natural, unplanned ignitions in most MAs. The revised Plan emphasizes the use of natural (unplanned) fire ignitions for multiple objectives as well as the use of prescribed fire, particularly in the backcountry (MA5–487,400 acres). The direction also emphasizes hazardous fuels reduction in the WUI. Some commenters wished to see increased use of fire (both prescribed and natural, unplanned ignitions) to achieve Plan desired conditions, and although I agree additional fire use would be beneficial, the amount of fuel treatment established in FW-OBJ-FIRE-01 (5,000 to 15,000 acres annually) is based on likely funding and staffing levels.

Some commenters were concerned with the emissions produced during prescribed burning. They requested additional forest debris utilization to avoid producing smoke. Two forestwide plan components (FW-DC-AQ-01 and FW-GDL-AQ-01) provide direction for cooperating with federal, state, tribal, and local air quality agencies as appropriate to meet air quality standards. The KNF has been able to meet air quality standards through the appropriate timing and location of prescribed burns. In addition, the KNF has an aggressive utilization policy to reduce slash and support biomass markets. However, there are many ecological reasons to use prescribed fire as a resource management tool in reducing forest debris rather than using it as biomass for another purpose. The ecological benefits of fire are described in the vegetation section of the final EIS.

The three action alternatives have similar approaches to the use of fire. Alternative B Modified has a mixture of fuels treatments (planned and unplanned ignitions as well as mechanical treatment). Alternative D provides more opportunity for mechanical treatment, while also allowing planned and unplanned ignitions. Alternative C has the least mechanical treatments, while providing for planned and unplanned ignitions. Alternative C is the most responsive to the desire to restore fire to the landscape. However, because of its mixture of fuel treatments and

overall movement towards vegetation desired conditions, I find Alternative B Modified provides the best opportunity for mitigating hazards in the WUI and restoration of fire-adapted ecosystems.

Revision Topic 3 – Watersheds and Aquatic Species

There were two primary reasons the 1987 Plan needed to be revised for watershed and aquatic dependent resources. The first was to establish management direction that recognizes and emphasizes watershed restoration activities. The second was to address changes in the physical and biological components of the aquatic ecosystem, such as water quality impairments; threatened, endangered, and sensitive species; soil productivity; and habitat conditions. The 1987 Plan had very little direction regarding watersheds, and no direction for restoration or improvement. Since the 1987 Plan was written there has been an increased focus by the State on identifying water quality impaired streams under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. Currently, about one-half of the subwatersheds on the Forest include or have the potential to influence one or more of these listed impaired segments. In addition, since the 1987 Plan was written, the Kootenai River white sturgeon was listed as an endangered species and the bull trout was listed as a threatened species. Both have designated critical habitat within the Forest's boundary (although the amount of critical habitat for sturgeon within the KNF is extremely small, at approximately 80 acres).

The 1987 Plan was amended in 1995 by the Inland Native Fish Strategy (USDA 1995) (INFISH). This amendment provides direction for the protection of riparian and aquatic habitat and species. The INFISH resulted in improved management direction for the 1987 Plan for these ecosystems.

As described on page 13 of this final ROD, the INFISH amendment is being carried forward under the revised Plan. In addition, the revised Plan includes further direction and emphasis for watershed protection and restoration. The INFISH concept of "priority watersheds" has been refined in the revised Plan as "conservation" and "restoration" subwatersheds. Conservation subwatersheds were identified to protect stronghold populations of native salmonids and compliment restoration efforts. Restoration subwatersheds were identified based on degraded habitat conditions, water quality limitations, depressed populations of native fish species, and a relatively higher potential for improvement. Restoration subwatersheds include both active and passive restoration efforts.

Active restoration opportunities will be pursued whenever possible, and considered in the context of existing budget levels and other land management priorities. Cooperation with land owners and interested parties such as watershed councils, state agencies, tribes, and conservation districts could result in improved accomplishments because resources could be pooled to accomplish conservation and restoration actions. Passive restoration will rely on the implementation of guidelines and best management practices to maintain watershed processes and aquatic habitat conditions to allow for natural rates of recovery. It will be more prevalent in MAs such as 1b and 1c that have wilderness characteristics.

Some commenters were concerned the revised Plan does not address requirements under the Clean Water Act and other laws. The KNF is required to follow laws, policies, and regulations that relate to managing NFS lands and the final EIS lists those that are applicable to each resource, including those related to watersheds and aquatic habitats. The revised Plan provides broad, strategic guidance that is designed to supplement, not replace, overarching direction from these sources. For example, Forest Service Handbook direction includes the requirement to protect water quality and abate or mitigate adverse water quality impacts while meeting other resource goals and objectives (FSH 2509.22). The KNF addresses this mandate by implementing

best management practices (BMPs) outlined in the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook (FSH 2509.22) at the project level of analysis and implementation.

The 1987 Plan did not include any aquatic management indicator species (MIS). For the revised Plan, I am selecting a macroinvertebrate assemblage to serve as bioindicators of water quality and aquatic habitat conditions across the planning unit. Macroinvertebrates as the aquatic MIS will provide an appropriate measure of the ecological health of a waterbody or river and can be used to reveal pollution problems. However, macroinvertebrates are not indicators of fish populations or distribution; therefore, the macroinvertebrate assemblage will not be used for that purpose. (Selection of MIS in the revised Plan is required under 36 CFR 219.19.)

Although forestwide direction common to all alternatives are designed to protect and improve soil, riparian and aquatic habitat conditions, Alternative B Modified is expected to most effectively improve the overall trend in watershed conditions across the forest. Protection and restoration measures included in the revised Plan will improve habitat conditions for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. In addition, the macroinvertebrate assemblage is expected to improve.

I believe the selected alternative presents the best balance between acres with active restoration opportunities and acres with passive restoration. It includes a greater number of active restoration acres than found under Alternative C and allows for improved conditions on a faster trajectory than passive restoration. Alternative D provides the highest amount of active restoration acres. However, Alternative D does not improve vegetation conditions to the degree found under Alternative B Modified. As described under the vegetation revision topic, Alternative B Modified provides the most movement towards vegetation desired conditions, which increases resistance and resiliency to disturbance. This increased resistance and resiliency of vegetation to disturbance provides protection to watersheds, with fewer large-scale disturbances that could increase sedimentation and damage stream conditions.

Revision Topic 4 – Terrestrial Wildlife

Over the life of the 1987 Plan, changes have occurred that have resulted in modifications to wildlife management. Species listed as threatened and endangered have changed. The peregrine falcon, gray wolf, and bald eagle have been removed and the Canada lynx added. Knowledge related to habitat conservation for grizzly bear, lynx, and other species has continued to evolve and the sensitive species list was updated. The revised Plan incorporates new information relative to habitat fragmentation, patch size, biodiversity, and ecosystem management strategies. Recent plan amendment direction relative to listed species (grizzly bear and lynx) is carried forward as forestwide direction to help move threatened species toward recovery (see Decisions Carried Forward, page 13 of this final ROD).

In order to preserve species populations, genetic structure, biotic communities, and landscapes, there has been an increased emphasis on the maintenance of ecological functions, processes, and disturbance regimes. The desired conditions for vegetation and fire are the foundation of the KNF's approach to providing species viability through a coarse filter approach. The revised plan includes a fine filter approach by providing direction to address specific habitat components or potential management effects to specific species and/or groups of species. It provides sufficient direction for implementation activities to maintain species viability and help move threatened and endangered species towards recovery.

The revised Plan allocates 214,500 acres to MA 1 and 503,100 acres to MA 5. These MAs emphasize natural processes with minimal human intervention/disturbance, and provide wildlife

security habitat. There are also opportunities for active restoration of vegetation conditions (wildlife habitat) in areas which may currently be outside of desired conditions (MA6—64 percent or 1,408,600 acres).

The revised Plan contains specific direction to provide wildlife connectivity across the KNF in cooperation with other agencies, and is compatible with connectivity efforts in British Columbia. The direction is designed to be flexible in light of the dynamic nature of the habitat and disturbance processes on the KNF to accommodate multiple species' habitats and will allow them to move, connect, and persist.

The revised Plan changes the management indicator species (MIS) from those found in the 1987 Plan. The MIS under the 1987 Plan included threatened and endangered species (grizzly bear, grey wolf, bald eagle, and peregrine falcon), elk, whitetail deer, mountain goat, and pileated woodpecker. Under the revised plan, the KNF chose species whose habitat will likely be influenced by forest management to provide a meaningful measure of progress towards vegetation desired conditions. Although commenters suggested a wide variety of species, the KNF chose landbird assemblage and elk after considering the location and type of management activities that are likely to occur. The species in the landbird assemblage were selected to represent a variety of habitat conditions that could be tied to desired conditions for vegetation. Rocky Mountain elk were selected because they are a commonly hunted species and their habitat needs (security habitat) may be influenced by planned management programs. The final EIS and the Kootenai Idaho Panhandle Zone (KIPZ) MIS Selection documentation provide additional information regarding MIS selection. (Selection of MIS in the revised Plan is required under 36 CFR 219.19.)

Some commenters specifically requested an "old growth" MIS. However, the KNF does not have an obligate old growth habitat species or a species that relies solely on old growth habitat. Regardless, the revised Plan recognizes the important habitat value old growth provides for a variety of species and includes direction that will maintain and develop additional old growth over time (see FW-DC-VEG-03, FW-STD-VEG-01, FW-GDL-VEG-01, and FW-GDL-VEG-02). Other important wildlife habitat components, such as snags and downed wood (coarse woody debris), will also be maintained under forestwide vegetation and wildlife guidelines (see FW-DC-VEG-07 and 08, FW-GDL-VEG-03 through 06, FW-DC-WL-12 and 13, and FW-GDL-WL-13).

The final EIS and revised Plan address public concerns for wildlife habitat security and demonstrate the importance of habitat security considerations for all aspects of KNF management. The grizzly bear access amendment ROD established standards for core (secure) habitat and motorized route densities within the Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zone and those are carried forward in the revised Plan as FW-STD-WL-02. This provides high levels of habitat security for all species. In addition, wilderness areas, recommended wilderness areas, inventoried roadless areas, and other non-motorized areas contribute to secure habitat and connectivity for some species. The KNF coordinated with State wildlife management agencies for setting management emphasis for each planning subunit, including elk habitat security and the revised Plan includes direction (FW-DC-WL-16) to coordinate with state agencies for ungulate habitat management.

I believe the revised plan's broad vegetation management approach to provide ecological components and processes at multiple scales on the landscape provides the full spectrum of habitats and conditions needed for the biological organisms associated with the various ecosystems of the KNF. As forest conditions trend toward desired conditions for vegetation and fire intensity and frequency, wildlife will experience habitat amounts, pattern, and connectivity similar to those found under the natural disturbance process they evolved with on the forest. The

benefits of management under Alternative B Modified for forest composition, structure, and pattern, as described in the vegetation section, provide the best opportunities for improving terrestrial wildlife habitat. Even though Alternative D provides more acres with management activities, there is less emphasis on restoration and movement of vegetation towards desired conditions as found under Alternative B Modified, and less secure habitat. Although Alternative C provides the most acres of security habitat, I believe Alternative B Modified provides sufficient security and limits on road densities to benefit grizzly bear, lynx, big game/ungulates, and other species. In addition, Alternative B Modified provides the greatest improvement in habitat through restoration of vegetation and movement towards vegetation desired conditions.

Revision Topic 5 – Access and Recreation

National Forests provide diverse outdoor recreation opportunities, connecting people to nature in a variety of settings and activities. Recreation on the KNF includes (but is not limited to) hunting, scenic viewing/driving, rock climbing, skiing, fishing, hiking, camping, horseback riding, mountain biking, OHV riding, and snowmobiling. Commenters stressed the important economic contribution of Forest recreation use to local economies and the high-value they place on traditional access opportunities.

Most of these activities occur across the Forest without conflict and National Visitor Use Monitoring has demonstrated overall satisfaction with KNF recreation management (see the access and recreation section of the final EIS). However, motor vehicle access for both summer and winter recreation is an ongoing issue for the public on both a local and national level. Although the KNF provides adequate space and terrain for diverse recreation experiences, watershed protection and wildlife security needs often limit non-winter motor vehicle use opportunities. Some commenters felt additional motor vehicle restrictions are needed to maximize ecological protections, while other commenters felt there are too many restrictions for motor vehicle use and opportunities are unnecessarily limited.

The Forest has been managing motor vehicle access and roads for decades. As shown by the 2011 Forest Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report, the Forest has increased the number of miles of roads with prohibition from 1,669 miles in 1987 to 5,041 miles in 2011. This reflects a change from 27 percent of the roads in 1987 having some form of prohibition to 64 percent of roads in 2011. Most of these increased prohibitions occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The 1987 Plan projected that 57 percent of roads would need some form of prohibition in order to provide the issue resolution desired. The 1987 Plan predicted there would be new road construction, with prohibitions placed on the new roads. The new road construction has been less than projected. Prohibitions have been placed on roads that previously had no prohibitions (which were not anticipated to have prohibitions in the 1987 Plan) and on newly constructed roads. The reasons for the unanticipated prohibitions include additional wildlife habitat security measures, to decrease potential sedimentation, and to improve hydrologic condition. Prohibitions have remained fairly constant for the last 5 years.

The Forest has also been managing over-snow vehicle access for several decades. The Forest currently has 258,000 acres closed to all motor vehicles for most or all of the winter months. These areas were closed because of critical winter range or because they are recommended wilderness or non-motorized recreation under the 1987 Plan. There have not been changes to areas restricted to over-snow vehicle use for several years. Generally, forest monitoring has not indicated a need for change regarding over-snow vehicle use on the KNF. Two exceptions include the over-snow vehicle use in the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area, which is currently undergoing site-specific travel management planning, and the boundary area of the Scotchman Peaks recommended wilderness area near Savage Peak.

My decision does not change non-winter motor vehicle use on the Forest. The KNF completed non-winter motor vehicle use designations as required by Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212) in 2009, resulting in motor vehicle use maps (MVUM) forestwide. The areas and routes designated as motorized on the MVUMs will not change, except following project-level NEPA analysis. My decision, therefore, primarily affects over-snow vehicle and mechanized (bicycle) use.

While my decision does not affect non-winter motor vehicle use, it does affect future options to consider in designating additional miles or areas for motorized use following site-specific analysis. In selecting Alternative B Modified, I considered changes to existing uses and ecological needs. Alternative C emphasized non-motorized recreation, while Alternative D emphasized motorized recreation. I felt Alternative C resulted in too many acres with motorized restrictions, which analysis shows is not needed to protect wildlife (see wildlife section in the final EIS chapter 3). Alternative D, on the other hand, would release from closure too many areas that may present an impact on wildlife and non-motorized users. Alternative B Modified is similar to current conditions, with some changes for areas that have public conflict.

Alternative B Modified, together with the allocation of the Whitefish Divide area to MA5a from Alternative D, provides a balance to accommodate reasonable assurances of motorized and non-motorized recreation choices, while protecting forest resources. Alternative B Modified does the following:

- Incorporates previous landscape level plan decisions to protect ecological resources such as water quality, aquatic habitats, and wildlife security (see Decisions Carried Forward, page 13 of this final ROD);
- Provides the opportunity to consider non-winter motor vehicle use designations on 74 percent of the Forest. This is a change from 76 percent of the Forest under the 1987 Plan;
- Allows over-snow vehicle use on 86 percent of the Forest. This is a change from 88 percent under the 1987 Plan;
- Allows mechanized use (e.g., mountain bikes) on 91 percent of the Forest. This is a change from 96 percent under the 1987 Plan;
- Continues to provide dispersed recreation opportunities across the KNF with some improvements to concentrated use areas. This is an increased emphasis on improvements over what was in the 1987 Plan.

The revised Plan makes broad, strategic decisions identifying suitable uses for the land while providing the settings for balanced recreation opportunities consistent with goals for watershed health, sustainable ecosystems, and biodiversity. I believe my decision best balances the Forest's multiple-use objectives, while maintaining diverse, high quality outdoor recreation opportunities, a road and trail system that provides access, and protection for terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

Revision Topic 6 – Recommended Wilderness

As described on page 11 of this final ROD, public opinion regarding wilderness recommendation varies widely. I recognize the complexity of public concerns over recommended wilderness and considered all public comments related to recommended wilderness boundary changes between the draft and final EIS. Some commenters suggested boundary changes that were not made because they were counter to our wilderness evaluation, while others suggested boundaries that were not manageable, locatable on the ground, or met the characteristics of wilderness. Some commenters did not want the Forest Service to evaluate areas for wilderness potential at all;

however, the Forest Service is directed to evaluate areas for recommended wilderness under 1982 Rule 36 CFR 219.17(a) where it states “roadless areas within the NFS shall be evaluated and considered for recommendation as potential wilderness areas during the forest planning process.”

Some did not believe the delineation of the Inventoried Roadless Areas is correct and therefore are an inappropriate starting point for wilderness evaluation. Some felt wilderness characteristics were under-valued while others felt they were over-valued. Some commenters felt the inclusion of improvements within recommended wilderness did not meet eligibility requirements. Our direction allows the potential wilderness inventory to contain improvements such as unauthorized and user-created roads, and evidence of historic logging activities where the use of mechanical equipment is not evident. It also allows adjustment of the potential wilderness inventory area boundaries that are taken forward as the preliminary administrative recommendations for manageability.

I believe the wilderness evaluation conducted by the Forest followed manual and handbook direction, resulting in appropriate suitability determinations. Potential wilderness is based on the inherent wilderness quality determined in the capability, availability, and needs assessment. In addition to the inherent wilderness quality an area might possess, the area should provide opportunities and experiences one would expect to find in a wilderness environment. Management of preliminary recommendations considers establishing boundaries that are easy to define and locate on the ground. The final EIS and errata describe the analysis used in evaluating individual roadless areas on the KNF and include a summary of each area’s evaluation of suitability for recommended wilderness (see Appendix C of the final EIS).

The wilderness evaluation indicated 217,348 acres had potential and were suitable as recommended wilderness. Of these, Alternative C recommended the most acreage for wilderness at 242,800 acres. Alternative B Modified recommended acreage similar to the 1987 Plan at 105,300 acres. Alternative D recommended the least acreage at 37,300 acres. I selected the Scotchman Peaks, Roderick, and Cabinet Additions areas from Alternative B Modified, both because they had public support and because they contain outstanding wilderness characteristics. However, I have decided to allocate the Whitefish Divide area to MA5a as analyzed in Alternative D, instead of recommending it for wilderness, due to ongoing public concerns associated with ongoing travel management in the area.

Some commenters were concerned I inappropriately considered the 1987 Plan recommended wilderness acreage a “cap” on my recommendation. Although the recommended acres in Alternative B Modified are similar to what was recommended in the 1987 Plan, I did not consider this amount as my limit. I carefully considered a range of recommended wilderness areas, as well as other allocations, to determine the mix of land and resource uses that would best meet public needs. I find the areas recommended in this decision are an appropriate balance for the Kootenai National Forest in consideration of the wilderness evaluation, alternative analyses, and public comments.

The other roadless areas that commenters suggested for recommended wilderness, but which I am not recommending (including the Whitefish Divide area from Alternative B Modified), will primarily be allocated to the various MA5 categories. The desired conditions in these backcountry MAs will provide a range of non-motorized, motorized, and mechanized opportunities and secure wildlife habitat.

Some commenters also expressed concern over the allowed uses in recommended wilderness. The revised Plan includes desired conditions and standards for these areas that are incompatible with motorized and mechanized use. Thus, I am also making the site-specific decision to restrict

over-snow vehicle and mechanized use (mountain biking) within recommended wilderness (with the exceptions allowed in the Montana Wilderness Study Act Ten Lakes area) as described on pages 5 and 6 of this ROD. I am including this prohibition because these uses impact wilderness character and, over time, could potentially lead to these areas no longer being suitable for wilderness designation. However, the other backcountry areas provide a range of remote mechanized, non-motorized, and motorized opportunities, and allow these uses.

I find the analysis for the final EIS gave independent consideration to forest-specific issues pertaining to recommended wilderness management. The analysis considered impacts of existing motorized and mechanized use in the evaluation of the Forest's 43 IRAs for wilderness capability and availability as described in appendix C to the final EIS. In particular, the Forest addressed mountain biking, over-snow and motorized uses, explained how site-specific uses were analyzed, and discussed why continuation of some uses would compromise wilderness values of areas recommended for wilderness.

With respect to mountain biking, the analysis examined how mountain biking as an activity is inconsistent with the "primitive and unconfined" definition used to determine wilderness suitability, and discusses the continued growth of the sport and increasing use on public lands. I believe the analysis examined how mountain biking can lead to user conflicts and resource impacts and gave adequate consideration to site-specific trails in or near recommended wilderness, such as the Parmenter Divide Trail along the Cabinet Additions which was deliberately left outside the recommended wilderness boundary. The project record and final EIS discussed the number of miles of trail (126 miles) currently open to mountain biking that will be closed by my decision.

I believe the Forest's analysis of over-snow use examines how this activity is incompatible with more primitive activities and the opportunity for solitude associated with wilderness character. The final EIS and project record explain how existing over-snow use was considered while examining wilderness capability and availability.

The Ten Lakes Montana Wilderness Study Area (MWSA) has been, and will continue to be, managed in accordance with applicable law and policy, including but not limited to the Montana Wilderness Study Act and Forest Service Manual 2329. Language in the 1977 Act requires that the MWSA be managed to maintain its presently existing (1977) wilderness character and potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Under a 2007 settlement agreement with the Montana Wilderness Association, the Forest is currently completing a travel management plan for the Ten Lakes MWSA and adjacent areas. The site-specific analysis for that project will identify the appropriate level of motor vehicle use to ensure the wilderness character that existed in 1977 is maintained. Because of this ongoing effort, I am deferring recommendations in the MWSA to the 1985 Ten Lakes MWSA Final Report and Proposal.

Wilderness is highly valued by many, and represents deeply held values and beliefs. Yet, recommendation and potential Congressional designation of lands for wilderness will necessarily result in losses of other opportunities such as snowmobiling and mountain biking within these areas. The revised Plan provides a balance of opportunities in response to the broad range of public values.

Revision Topic 7 – Timber

Timber harvest on the KNF has been an important management issue since the KNF was established. The management direction in the 1987 Plan emphasized the production of timber, with the majority of MAs allowing or promoting timber management. This is reflected in the

established allowable sale quantity (ASQ) in the 1987 Plan of 227 MMBF/year. In November 1995, the Chief of the Forest Service adjusted the ASQ to 150 MMBF/year in response to an administrative appeal. In the 1990s, the KNF began to focus on ecosystem management and ecological sustainability, with a decreased emphasis on commercial timber production and an increased emphasis on timber harvest as a tool to restore vegetation, improve wildlife habitat, or to address other resource requirements (e.g., riparian habitat conservation direction under the Inland Native Fish Strategy and grizzly bear management). In addition, declining budgets have reduced staffing over the past several years. Subsequently, timber production levels have been well below the ASQ established in the 1987 Plan, with an average volume sold of 44.9 MMBF/year over the last 5 years (2008–2012). Although the ASQ is intended to represent the maximum sustainable harvest level subject to management constraints with no budget limitation, there is a public expectation that the full ASQ can be achieved and support the commensurate level of local jobs and income displayed in the 1987 Plan's analysis.

The final EIS reanalyzed the ASQ based on changes in policy and ecosystem needs, and also considered an evaluation of timber suitability as required by 36 CFR 219.14. The revised Plan outlines the ASQ as 80.2 MMBF/year over the first decade. The revised Plan also provides a predicted annual volume sold of 47.5 MMBF/year, based on current budget levels. If budgets increase, the Forest has the ability to increase timber harvest above the predicted timber volume sold up to the ASQ. This represents the maximum level of sustainable timber harvest given management requirements for other resources such as water quality, old growth, and wildlife habitat.

Some public commenters are concerned about what they perceive as modest projections for timber harvest in the revised Plan. They would like the KNF to achieve sustainable and reliable harvest levels but prefer the revised Plan include a higher ASQ. They would also like the objective for timber harvest in the revised Plan to match the ASQ rather than the predicted volume sold, which is constrained by budget.

The final EIS includes a detailed analysis to determine sustainable levels of timber harvest relative to desired conditions and forest management requirements. I believe the ASQ level is the maximum that could be achieved given additional funding (more than twice the current budget) and habitat and water quality protection constraints for other resources. Providing an objective that is realistic given current budgets levels is appropriate. The predicted volume sold is a reasonable estimate of the sustainable timber volume that could be sold given current funding levels. The social and economic section of the final EIS highlights the importance of forest outputs on local economies and communities, as well as how forest management affects jobs and income. KNF staff works to ensure the economic feasibility of all commercial timber sales and I find the amount of timber harvest predicted in the revised Plan is achievable, given current budget levels. Thus, timber harvest will continue to contribute to the viability of the forest products infrastructure.

The revised plan also considers utilization of non-sawlog material in keeping with National and Regional Forest Service direction to increase availability and utilization of biomass. Not only does this support non-saw/biomass material markets, it is important for reducing fuels and restoring forests while protecting air quality and reducing required collections for brush disposal.

I find Alternative D is most responsive to this revision topic. It has the highest level of ASQ and predicted timber volume and provides the most wood fiber in response to public demands. Alternatives B Modified and C provide lower levels of forest products. However, in consideration of the full range of National Forest management resource values, I believe Alternative B

Modified provides the best opportunity for sustainable timber production while contributing to an economically viable forest products industry.

Alternatives

All alternatives in the final EIS adhere to multiple use and sustained yield of goods and services (36 CFR 219.1(a), (b)). In addition, they share objectives and standards for managing forest resources and complying with applicable laws and policies. They also contain the same direction to contribute to the diversity of desired native and non-native plant and animal communities and contribute toward the recovery of threatened and endangered species. Forestwide direction identified in the revised Plan applies to all action alternatives.

The revision topics drove alternative development. The primary difference between alternatives is in the allocation of acres by MA to meet the purpose and need for change, and address one or more of the revision topics.

Each alternative was developed to be in compliance with applicable law and regulation, as well as national policy and direction including, but not limited to, the Healthy Forests Initiative, National Fire Plan, and National Energy Policy.

The following did not change between the action alternatives in the final EIS and errata:

- **Forest Plan Goals, Desired Conditions, and Standards and Guidelines —** Management area and forestwide direction for goals, desired conditions, standards, and guidelines remained constant for all action alternatives.
- **Developed Recreation Sites—**Existing developed recreation sites were retained in all alternatives. There were no site-specific proposals to remove or create developed recreation sites. Allocation of primary recreation areas (MA7) remained constant for all action alternatives.
- **Utility Rights-of-Way and Communication Sites—**Direction for and location of designated utility rights-of-way and communication sites remained constant for all alternatives.
- **Wild and Scenic Rivers—**Direction for, and allocation of, eligible wild and scenic rivers (MA2) remains constant for all alternatives.
- **Wilderness Study Area—**The Wilderness Study Area on the Forest was established by an act of Congress in 1977. The Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area and its management are outlined by the Wilderness Study Act. This management remained constant for all alternatives.
- **Designated Wilderness—**The Cabinet Mountain Wilderness Designation remained constant for all alternatives.

Under the Draft EIS, allocation of special areas and research natural areas remained constant for all action alternatives. Based on comments, these allocations were changed for Alternative B Modified, resulting in differences between the action alternatives.

Alternatives Considered in Detail, Including the No-Action Alternative

The no action and three action alternatives are summarized as follows. See the final EIS for a full description and analysis of effects. Table 5 at reference page 37 of the errata to the final EIS contains a comparison of the MA allocations for each alternative.

Alternative A is the no-action alternative. This alternative is the 1987 Plan, as amended to date, and accounts for current laws and regulations. New information, inventories, and technologies were used to evaluate this alternative. Output levels were recalculated for this alternative based on these new sources of information and amended direction. The no-action alternative retains the 1987 Plan goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, and MA prescriptions, as amended. This alternative serves as the baseline for comparison with the action alternatives.

Alternative B Modified is based on Alternative B from the DEIS, with modifications in response to comments. This alternative is the preferred alternative. It is the result of collaborative efforts since 2003 and responds to the identified purpose and need. This alternative emphasizes moving towards desired future conditions and contributing to ecological, social, and economic sustainability. Alternative B Modified would manage approximately 5 percent of the Forest as recommended wilderness (MA1b), 22 percent as backcountry (MA5), and 64 percent as general forest (MA6). Thirty-six percent of the Forest would be suitable for timber production.

Alternative C emphasizes wilderness values and protection of backcountry while moving towards desired conditions. There is an increased emphasis on natural disturbance processes (such as unplanned wildfire ignitions for multiple objectives) and prescribed burning. Mechanical treatments (e.g., timber harvest, stream improvements) also occur in order to move towards watershed and vegetation desired conditions. Alternative C would have more opportunities for backcountry and non-motorized recreation (MA1 — 343,700 acres; MA5 — 481,700 acres). This alternative also has more acres recommended as wilderness (215,900 acres) than any other alternative. About 59 percent would be allocated to general forest (MA6). Thirty-four percent of the Forest would be suitable for timber production.

Alternative D emphasizes achieving desired condition through mechanical means. Timber production is emphasized while moving towards vegetation desired conditions. This alternative has the most acres available for timber production and motorized access, with 76 percent of acreage allocated to MA6 (general forest). There would be fewer acres allocated to recommended wilderness (36,100 acres or about 2 percent) and backcountry (MA5 – less than 13 percent of the Forest). Thirty-eight percent of the Forest would be suitable for timber production.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated From Detailed Study

Federal agencies are required by NEPA to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). Public comments received in response to the proposed action provided suggestions for alternative methods for achieving the purpose and need. Some of these alternatives may have been outside the scope of this revision effort or, duplicative of the alternatives considered in detail. Over 19 alternatives (or alternative variations) were considered, but dismissed from detailed consideration for reasons summarized in chapter 2 of the final EIS.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations require agencies to specify the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). Forest Service policy (FSH 1909.15) defines environmentally preferable as: "An alternative that best meets the goals of Section 101 of NEPA. … Ordinarily this is the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources."

I find, based upon the laws and regulations guiding National Forest System management, that Alternative B Modified is the environmentally preferred alternative. Although Alternative C would allow the fewest mechanical ground-disturbing activities and lowest acres allowing motorized use, it does not address the six goals of NEPA as well as Alternative B Modified does. I base my finding on the following comparison showing how the alternatives address the goals of Section 101 of NEPA:

1. **Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustees of the environment for succeeding generations**

   Alternative B Modified emphasizes moving forest conditions toward desired future conditions while contributing to ecological, social, and economic sustainability. Alternative B Modified provides the most movement towards vegetation desired conditions while providing sustainable levels of timber harvest similar to current levels. The higher timber harvest levels under Alternative B Modified than Alternative C provides the KNF's sustainable share of products and uses demanded by the public, while having a higher probability of improving and restoring vegetation for future generations than does Alternative D. Alternative A would provide the least improvement toward desired conditions.

2. **Assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings**

   Alternative B Modified achieves maintenance of a safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing Forest better than the other alternatives because it provides the best mix of resource utilization, active and passive management, and motorized and non-motorized recreation uses along with the safeguards provided by standards and guidelines for maintaining water quality, scenery, and wildlife habitat. Alternative B Modified provides recommended wilderness at levels similar to current levels of Alternative A, recommending the best of our backcountry areas for this designation. Alternative B Modified also provides timber harvest levels similar to current Alternative A levels and maintains access to important recreational areas better than Alternative C. Although Alternative D provides higher levels of timber harvest and access opportunities, it does not provide the levels of recommended wilderness as is currently enjoyed on the Forest.

3. **Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences**

   The beneficial uses that are most varied between alternatives and that I considered in this finding are wood fiber production and a reasonable balance between motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. Alternative B Modified achieves a higher level of reasonable, sustainable beneficial uses than Alternative C. While Alternative D provides higher levels of wood fiber production and motorized recreation allocations, it does so at the expense of non-motorized recreation allocations. Although the beneficial uses of Alternative A are similar, Alternative B Modified also provides the most movement of vegetation towards

desired conditions, which will provide for more resistant and resilient forests. This improves the health of our forests and watersheds, enhances wildlife habitat, and reduces undesirable and unintended consequences.

4. Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment, which supports diversity and variety of individual choice

Part of preserving our historic and cultural national heritage is recognizing that humans *are* a natural aspect of our national heritage – humans have utilized the physical and cultural resources offered by the KNF for thousands of years. Recognizing that, I find that the best way to preserve that heritage, and the environment that supports diversity and variety of choice, is to manage for a National Forest that provides a balance between the physical resource use and the appropriate protection of cultural and historic resources. Based upon the collaborative public efforts, tribal consultation, and the effects of each alternative displayed in the final EIS, I find that Alternative B Modified meets this goal better than the other alternatives. It improves on Alternative A and provides the best balance of uses between Alternative C's emphasis on wilderness values and protection of backcountry and Alternative D's emphasis on achieving desired conditions through mechanical means.

5. Achieve a balance between population and resource use, which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities

The public demands a variety of products and uses that can be provided by their National Forests. National forest lands and resources are evaluated as important local resources that contribute to the quality of lifestyles in the region. The final EIS alternative analysis compares the various values the public uses to determine their quality of life varying from economic resource extraction values (timber harvest and minerals) to less tangibly-defined resources such as wilderness values and backcountry protection. The challenge is in defining the balance sought in this goal, and I find that Alternative B Modified achieves that balance. Alternative B Modified provides more resource use than Alternative C, but more opportunities for backcountry protection than Alternative D.

6. Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources

I find Alternative B Modified enhances the quality of renewable resources and provides sustainable use of renewable resources. The standards and guidelines and the management area allocation under Alternative B Modified provides for levels of resource use that are similar to current levels of Alternative A, while providing protection measures and preserving areas as backcountry or recommended wilderness. While Alternative D provides higher levels of resource use, it does not provide for as much vegetation restoration as does B Modified. Alternative C emphasizes more passive management and greater amount of backcountry and recommended wilderness, but it does so at the expense of resource utilization and does not achieve as much vegetation restoration as Alternative B Modified.

Range of Alternatives

After considering the analysis in Alternatives A through D, and the alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study, I believe a reasonable range of alternatives was carefully evaluated in compliance with the NEPA.

Although consideration of budget constraints reduced the variation in the effects of the actions across the alternatives, the analysis in the final EIS covered a full spectrum of management intensity ranging from a preservation emphasis in Alternative C to a highly-managed, commodity output and motorized recreation emphasis in Alternative D. All action alternatives are realistic, implementable, and responsive to the revision topics.

Role of Science

The development of the final EIS and the revised Plan has been based on consideration of the best available science throughout the planning process. This has occurred by comprehensively reviewing available scientific research and other information relevant to the resource areas addressed. Scientific conclusions are drawn from well-supported data sources and data availability is disclosed. Scientific sources relied on were cited, responsible opposing views were discussed, incomplete and unavailable information was acknowledged, and scientific uncertainty and risk was addressed in relevant portions of the final EIS or project record. In addition, the specific modeling and analysis methods used were documented as appropriate.

The revised Plan provides for the sustainability of the resources of the KNF, while directing the coordination and management of multiple uses of national forest land such as recreation, timber, mining, wildlife, fish, watershed, and wilderness. Recognizing that conditions on the KNF do not remain static, that new information is constantly surfacing, and that scientific uncertainty is associated with some conclusions regarding resource effects, the revised Plan embraces an adaptive management approach. See page 43 of this final ROD and chapter 5 of the revised Plan for more information regarding the KNF adaptive management framework.

Relationship to Other Entities

The Planning Rule under 36 CFR §219.7(c) requires the review of planning and land use policies of other Federal Agencies, State and local governments and Indian tribes. This review includes (1) consideration of the objectives of these entities as expressed in their plans and policies; (2) an assessment of the interrelated impacts of these plans and policies; (3) determination of how the Forest revised plan should deal with impacts identified; and (4) where conflicts with Forest Service planning are identified, consideration of alternatives for resolution.

County, State, and Federal plans were reviewed during the plan revision process. These plans are referenced and incorporated in numerous areas of analysis in the final EIS, including social and economic, water, air, wildlife, fire, and vegetation. Direction in the revised Plan incorporates information from these other plans.

County Governments

The Forest worked with county governments in developing the revised Plan. Their comments were reviewed and carefully considered. Many meetings were held with the counties throughout the planning process (see the planning record, volume 1, and volume 2).

The interdisciplinary team reviewed the counties' comprehensive management plans and did not find any direct conflicts or inconsistencies in the revised Plan. Areas where the Forest found the Plan and the counties' comprehensive management plan goals are well-aligned in several areas include a Lincoln County Growth Policy objective to "achieve successful implementation of a forest plan consistent with forest health and multiple use principles to reduce catastrophic fire potential and improve economic conditions". Other Lincoln County plan elements well-aligned with the revised Plan include the intergovernmental coordination goals to protect fish and wildlife resources; manage, protect, enhance, and conserve water resources; encourage the protection and

enhancement of water resources and fish and wildlife habitat; and allow for the development and maintenance of a safe, efficient, and environmentally sound transportation network. An example from the Boundary County Comprehensive Plans includes a forestry guideline stating “planning decisions should encourage multiple uses of forest resources and promote harvest, thinning, and other silvicultural practices to ensure safety and to improve the health and diversity of forest land.” An example from the Bonner County Comprehensive Plan includes a natural resources goal to “strive to manage its natural resources to attain the greatest long term public benefit”.

Despite the consistency between land use plans, I understand county representatives perceive issues regarding economic effects related to expected timber outputs and motorized access. The final EIS social and economic section discusses these impacts, but I acknowledge the counties still dispute whether my decision will strike the correct balance between ecological protection and local economic need. With a large federal land base in northwest Montana, I recognize the local economic base is dependent on access and use of the Forest. I believe a productive working relationship between the Forest and county governments is vital for successfully implementing the Plan and supporting the economic base within the ecological considerations the Plan describes. For this reason, the Plan includes desired conditions and objectives which emphasize the Forest’s commitment to work with the counties, and other government agencies, in order to achieve multiple use goals on the KNF.

State

Several Montana State agencies are affected by, or affect Forest Service management. These include Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; the Montana Department of Environmental Quality; the Department of Natural Resource Conservation; and the Montana Department of Transportation. The Forest coordinated information with State agencies during all phases of the plan revision process. Those offices provided formal comments during the scoping and other public involvement stages. Statewide assessments were considered in the development of the revised Plan.

Tribes

The forest supervisor and members of the planning team met with tribal representatives from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho during development of the revised Plan. As a result, specific tribal comments were incorporated in the final EIS and revised Plan.

Federal

Management of federal lands adjacent to the KNF was considered in the development of the revised Plan and the analysis of cumulative effects in the final EIS.

Consideration of national scenic and historic trails, utility corridors, recommended wilderness, and other management concerns across boundaries were discussed with the Idaho Panhandle, Flathead, and Lolo National Forests. The forests met to ensure management problems weren’t created with the KNF revised Plan.

In addition, the Forest worked with the Border Patrol on developing direction within the revised Plan to coordinate on issues relating to national security along the northern international boundary.

Climate Change

Scientific understanding and public awareness of global climate change has increased dramatically in recent years. There is broad scientific consensus that increases in average global temperature is very likely if atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases continue to accumulate at current rates. How these potential global changes might translate to climatic changes on the KNF is much more uncertain.

The continuous forest planning process allows us to adjust our management plans as new, locally specific information with sufficient scientific confidence becomes available. The goals and objectives of the forest plan are consistent with maintaining the resilience and diversity of the vegetation, watersheds, and wildlife of the KNF in the face of the potential effects of climate change. Over the next 10 to 15 years, projected changes in global and continental average temperatures are much less than for later this century. Projected changes in precipitation patterns over the next 10 to 15 years are even smaller, although of greater uncertainty. Moreover, a 10 to 15-year time period is relatively short in terms of global and regional climate trends and conditions may not differ from the range of variability experienced in recent decades.

The Forest Service is undertaking substantial efforts to better understand the potential effects of climate change on resource management and the associated uncertainties at the scale of individual national forests. Ongoing national, regional, and forest-specific monitoring and scientific research will continue to add to our understanding, and will help to inform evaluations of whether adjustments in management actions are needed to maintain the health, diversity, and productivity of the National Forests and Grasslands, including the KNF.

The Plan goals and objectives are designed to maintain or improve the health, diversity, and productivity of the KNF. However, if planning, management, and monitoring information on resource conditions and trends, including those that may be affected by long-term climatic trends, indicate a need for change, the KNF will adjust forest plan direction as necessary.

Findings Related to Laws and Regulations

The Forest Service manages the KNF in conformance with many laws and regulations. I have reviewed the statutes specific to individual resources as described in chapter 3 of the final EIS, and I find this decision represents the best possible approach to both harmonizing and reconciling the current statutory duties of the Forest Service. Following are summaries of how the revised Plan addresses compliance with some of the more prominent applicable laws and regulations.

American Indian Religious Freedom Act

Federal agencies must make a good faith effort to understand how Indian religious practices may come into conflict with other forest uses and consider any adverse impacts on these practices in their decision-making practices. There are five federally-recognized American Indian nations with cultural affiliation on the KNF: the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, the Kalispel Tribe, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Spokane Tribe, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The aboriginal territory of the Kalispel, Coeur d'Alene, and Spokane Tribes, overlap with the territory now along the Clark Fork Valley with the territory used by the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The entire Forest is within aboriginal territory for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho.

The revised Plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. No effects on American Indian social, economic, or subsistence rights are anticipated as a result of this revised Plan. The Forest will continue to

consult with tribes during site-specific management activities that may impact treaty rights and/or cultural sites and cultural use. The revised Plan desired conditions, objectives, and guidelines include provisions in consideration of American Indian rights and interests and cultural resources. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with this act.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act

The purpose of this act is to provide protection for archaeological resources found on public lands and Indian lands of the United States. The legislation provides civil and criminal penalties for those who remove or damage archaeological resources in violation of the prohibitions contained in the act. The act prohibits the removal of archaeological resources on public lands or Indian lands without first obtaining a permit from the affected Federal land manager or Indian Tribe and requires Federal agencies to develop plans to survey lands under their management to determine the nature and extent of archaeological and cultural resources.

The revised Plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 800 regulations require assessments to establish the presence of historic properties within the area of potential effect for any site-specific activities and also meet the intent of this act. In addition, the Forest will continue to consult with tribes during site-specific management activities that may impact cultural sites and cultural use. Plan desired conditions, objectives, and guidelines include provisions in consideration American Indian rights and interests and cultural resources. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with this act.

Clean Air Act

According to the Clean Air Act of 1990 and the Organic Administration Act of 1897, the USDA Forest Service has the responsibility to protect the air, land, and water resources from the impacts of air pollutants produced within the national forest boundaries and to work with states to protect those same resources from degradation associated with the impacts of air pollution emitted outside of the national forest.

The revised Plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. The revised Plan does not create, authorize, or execute any activities with the potential to alter air quality, although it does provide for the consideration of certain types of activities such as prescribed burning. Forestwide desired conditions and guidelines include direction for meeting air quality standards established by Federal and State agencies during planning for prescribed burns. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with this act.

Clean Water Act

The intent of the act is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation’s waters. The revised Plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. The revised Plan does not create, authorize, or execute any ground-disturbing activity, although it does provide for the consideration of certain types of activities. The revised Plan contains direction to ensure all site-specific projects meet or exceed State Best Management Practices prepared under guidance of the Clean Water Act. Implementation of the revised Plan is expected to contribute to protecting or restoring the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of waters of the United States in accordance with the Clean Water Act. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with this act.

Endangered Species Act

The purpose of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is to provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered species and threatened species depend may be conserved and to provide for the conservation of such endangered species and threatened species. Section 7(a)(1) of the act requires federal agencies to carry out programs for the conservation of listed species. In addition, ESA requires federal agencies to insure that any agency action does not jeopardize the continued existence of the species (ESA Section 7(a)(2)). ESA also requires the USFWS and Forest Service, respectively, to base the biological opinion and subsequent agency action on the use of best scientific and commercially available data [16 U.S.C. 1536(a)(2)].

In accordance with Section 7(c) of the act, USFWS identified the listed and proposed threatened or endangered species that may be present on the Forest. Biological assessments (BAs)were prepared for the identified terrestrial, aquatic, and plant species.

The terrestrial BA found implementation of the revised Plan *may affect, and is likely to adversely affect* Canada lynx and grizzly bear. The BA also determined that implementation of the revised Plan will *adversely affect* designated critical habitat for Canada lynx. The BA outlines the specific reasons why implementation of the revised Plan may have short-term adverse effects to these species and critical habitat and result in overall net benefits.

The aquatic BA found implementation of the revised Plan *may affect, and is likely to adversely affect* bull trout. The BA also determined the revised Plan will *adversely affect* designated critical habitat for bull trout. The BA outlines the specific reasons why implementation of the revised Plan may have short-term adverse effects to this species and critical habitat and result in overall net benefits.

The aquatic BA found implementation of the revised Plan will have *no effect* on the Kootenai River white sturgeon or its habitat. As documented in the BA, forest management activities have not been identified as a factor in the decline of the Kootenai River white sturgeon. Therefore, land management activities allowed under the revised Plan will not affect Kootenai River white sturgeon or its habitat.

The plant BA determined the revised Plan would have *no effect* on the Spalding's catchfly. This species has no known occurrences on the KNF; however, suitable habitat potentially exists for this plant and it is listed as "suspected." The protection measures offered for this species in the revised Plan result in the determination of no effect.

The USFWS issued Biological Opinions (BOs) covering Canada lynx, grizzly bear, bull trout and critical habitat for Canada lynx and bull trout. The BOs determined that the actions as proposed are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of Canada lynx, grizzly bear, or bull trout, and are not likely to destroy or adversely modify Canada lynx or bull trout critical habitat. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with the requirements of the ESA.

Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires that federal agencies make achieving environmental justice part of their mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of their program, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. The Order further stipulates that the agencies conduct their programs and activities in a manner that does not have the effect of excluding persons from participating in, denying persons the benefits of, or

subjecting persons to discrimination under such programs, policies, and activities because of their race, color, or national origin.

In accordance with Executive Order 12898, the revised Plan has been assessed to determine whether it would disproportionately impact minority or low-income populations. The social assessments for the KNF (Russell and Adams-Russell 2003, Russell and Downs 1995) and the assessment of social conditions and trends (Russell et al. 2006) did not identify any disproportionate impacts from forest management. In addition, collaboration and public involvement on the revised Plan did not identify any concerns regarding disproportionate impacts to low-income or minority populations. The revised Plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. Future site-specific activities will consider potential disproportionate effects on minority or low-income communities during project planning. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with Executive Order 12898.

Federal Land Policy and Management Act

This act allows the granting of easements across National Forest System Lands. The revised Plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. The revised Plan does not create, authorize, or execute any specific activity, although it does provide for the consideration of granting easements and rights-of-way. Forestwide desired conditions include strategic easements to provide reasonable public and administrative access. Therefore, the revised Plan is consistent with the act.

Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act

The procedures of the 1982 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.12(f)(6)) require that at least one alternative be developed that responds to and incorporates the Resources Planning Act (RPA) Program's tentative resource objectives for each National Forest as displayed in Regional Guides. The last RPA Program was developed in 1995 and the Regional Guide for the Northern Region was withdrawn on November 26, 2001, as required by the 2000 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.35 (e)). The Forest Service Strategic Plan 2007–2012 in lieu of an RPA Program, was completed in accordance with the Government Performance Results Act and the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. The Strategic Plan does not recommend outputs to incorporate in specific forest plans, but all alternatives analyzed in detail in the final EIS support the broad strategic objectives.

Invasive Species (Executive Order 13112)

Executive Order 13112 directs federal agencies to prevent the introduction of invasive species; detect and respond rapidly to and control populations of such species in a cost-effective and environmentally sound manner; to monitor invasive species populations accurately and reliably; to provide for restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded; to conduct research on invasive species and develop technologies to prevent introduction; and to provide for environmentally sound control of invasive species; and promote public education on invasive species and the means to address them. All of these actions are subject to the availability of appropriations. FSM 2900, Invasive Species Management, sets forth National Forest System policy, responsibilities, and direction for the prevention, detection, control, and restoration of effects from aquatic and terrestrial invasive species (including vertebrates, invertebrates, plants, and pathogens).

The revised Plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. The revised Plan does not create, authorize, or execute

any ground-disturbing activity, although it does provide for the consideration of certain types of activities that may have the potential to affect the dispersal of invasive species. The revised Plan includes forestwide desired condition statements, objectives, guidelines, and specific MA direction that stress the need to treat new invaders and utilize best management practices that limit the introduction and spread from management activities. In addition, other direction serves to protect watershed, soil, riparian, and aquatic conditions in ways that will reduce management caused disturbances which otherwise may increase weed spread or introduction. In addition, the monitoring program includes indicators associated with invasive plant species and effectiveness of treatments. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with Executive Order 13112.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186

Executive Order 13186 (January 10, 2001): "Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds" was issued by President Bill Clinton in furtherance of the purposes of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Acts, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. This order requires including effects of federal actions on migratory birds as part of the environmental analysis process. On December 8, 2008, the Forest Service signed a Memorandum of understanding with the USFWS to complement the Executive Order (USDA Forest Service 2008) and the Forest Service agreed to: (a) incorporate migratory bird habitat and population objectives and recommendations into the agency planning process, in cooperation with other governments, state, federal agencies, and non-federal partners and (b) strive to protect, restore, enhance, and manage habitat of migratory birds, and prevent the further loss or degradation of remaining habitats on NFS lands.

The KNF observes conservation strategies within the Partners in Flight Conservation Plan (PIF 2000). The use of this plan supports the goal of maintaining long-term sustainability of migratory bird species and their habitats as specified by this act and the E.O. The revised Plan includes forestwide and MA direction related to key stressors for migratory birds and their habitats, including direction to maintain or improve forest resilience, composition, and structure. Future site-specific activities or projects with the potential to impact migratory bird habitat will be analyzed with site-specific NEPA processes and comply with revised Plan direction. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and E.O. 13186.

Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act

Consistent with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. 528–531) (MUSYA), the Forest Service manages the NFS to sustain the multiple use of its renewable resources in perpetuity while maintaining the long-term health and productivity of the land. Resources are managed through a combination of approaches and concepts for the benefit of human communities and natural resources. As demonstrated in the final EIS and as required by MUSYA, this revised Plan guides sustainable, integrated resource management of the resources on the KNF in the context of the broader landscape, giving due consideration to the relative values of the various resources in particular areas. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with this act.

National Environmental Policy Act

This act requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. The environmental analysis and public involvement process complies with the major elements of the requirements set forth by the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508). These include 1) considering a broad range of reasonable alternatives, 2) disclosing cumulative effects, 3) using best scientific information, 4) consideration of long-term and short-term effects, and 5) disclosure of unavoidable adverse effects.

The KNF considered a broad range of alternatives in the final EIS and has compiled a comprehensive record of the effects relevant to the alternatives considering best scientific information. The revised Plan adopts all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm. These means include provisions for providing the ecological conditions needed to support biological diversity and standards and guidelines to mitigate adverse environmental effects that may result from implementing various management practices. The revised Plan includes monitoring requirements and an adaptive management approach to assure needed adjustments are made over time.

The revised Plan does not represent an irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. The revised Plan is a programmatic level planning effort and does not directly authorize any ground disturbing activities or projects. Future ground disturbing activities and projects will be consistent with this revised Plan and subject to additional site-specific public involvement, environmental analysis, and pre-decisional review processes. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with the act and CEQ implementation regulations.

National Forest Management Act

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires the development, maintenance, amendment, and revision of land and resource management plans for each unit of the National Forest System. These plans help create a dynamic management system so that an interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of physical, biological, economic, and other sciences will be applied to all future actions on the unit (16 U.S.C. 1604(b), (f), (g), and (o). The Forest Service is to ensure coordination of the multiple uses and sustained yield of products and services of the National Forest System (16 U.S.C. 1604(e)(1)).

The NFMA requires the Secretary of Agriculture to promulgate regulations for developing and maintaining forest plans. On April 9, 2012, the Department of Agriculture issued a final planning rule for National Forest System land management planning (2012 Rule) 77 FR 68 [21162-21276]. According to transition language of the 2012 Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.17(b)(3), the responsible official may elect to use the provisions of the prior planning regulations (1982 Planning Rule, dated September 30, 1982, and as amended[1]) to prepare plan amendments and revisions. The KNF elected to use the provisions of the 1982 Planning Rule for the plan revision. References in this final ROD to sections of 1982 Planning Rule version of 36 CFR are indicated in the citations.

NFMA Diversity Requirements

The NFMA also requires that forest plans "provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives, and within the multiple-use objectives of a land management plan adopted pursuant to this section, provide, where appropriate, to the degree practicable, for steps to be taken to preserve the diversity of tree species similar to that existing in the region controlled by the plan" (16 U.S.C. §1604 §6 (g)(3)(B)). The 1982 planning rule requires that "Forest planning shall provide for diversity of plant and animal communities and tree species consistent with the over-all multiple-use objectives of the planning area" (36 CFR 219.26). In addition, land management plans shall provide direction to manage fish and wildlife habitat to maintain viable[2]

[1] The 1982 provisions can be found online at http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/includes/nfmareg.html.

[2] For planning purposes, a viable population shall be regarded as one that has the estimated numbers and distribution of reproductive individuals to ensure its continued existence is well

populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area (36 CFR 219.19).

My interdisciplinary team identified the species that occur on the forests, determined which of those species have conservation needs, narrowed down which species could be affected by forest management, screened the risks to species through a coarse filter (ecosystem diversity), and developed additional plan components where necessary through a fine filter approach (species diversity).

The overall goal for ecological sustainability is to sustain native ecological systems and support diversity of native plant and animal species. The focus in the sustainability analysis was on species that are of regional or local conservation concern as indicated by documented threats to populations or habitats. Native vertebrates and invertebrates known to occur on land administered by the KNF were considered.

The initial focus of the assessment process was on ecosystem diversity, both in addressing the needs of healthy, diverse, and resilient ecosystems within the plan area, and in determining the extent to which maintaining ecosystem diversity will also maintain populations of plant and animal species within their ranges in the plan area. Ecosystem diversity is defined as the variety and relative extent of ecosystem types including their composition, structure, and processes. An assumption relative to terrestrial animals is that ecosystem diversity will maintain habitat for the persistence of the vast majority of species. This has often been referred to as the "coarse filter" conservation approach. For KNF, a coarse filter ecosystem diversity evaluation was used to compare existing vegetation communities to a set of reference conditions in order to evaluate changes in disturbance regimes and ecological communities. Based on the results of this evaluation, proposed forest plan components were developed to maintain or move vegetation communities towards a desired level or condition. A similar evaluation was done for ecosystem diversity of aquatic systems.

A complementary approach (species diversity) to the ecosystem diversity analysis was used for those species for which ecological conditions necessary to sustain populations may not be provided by maintaining ecosystem diversity. In these cases, a species-specific approach was used in the analysis and for the establishment of plan components (where necessary). The assessment of individual species is often referred to as the "fine-filter" approach.

The complete analysis as well as the plan components can be found in the document *Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests: Providing for Ecological Sustainability in the Revised Forest Plans*, which is located in the project record and on the forest website.

My review of the planning process, the final EIS, and the information provided in the ROD indicates the revised Plan and its preparation meet requirements for revising plans under the provisions of the 1982 Planning Rule, as allowed in the transition provisions of the 2012 Planning Rule at 36 CFR 219.17. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with the act.

National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires each Federal agency to take into account the effects of its actions on historic properties, prior to approving expenditure of Federal funds on an undertaking or prior to issuing any license. Furthermore, an agency must afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (an independent Federal agency created by NHPA) an

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distributed in the planning area (36 CFR 219.19).

opportunity to comment on any of the agency's undertaking that could affect historic properties. National forests must work closely with the appropriate scientific community and American Indian Tribes concerning cultural resources. Heritage inventories are to be completed prior to any ground disturbing activities associated with project level decisions. In addition, the laws and policies that govern cultural resource protection on Federal lands are coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPO) of Montana and Idaho, who serve in an advisory capacity.

The revised Plan is a programmatic level planning effort and does not directly authorize any ground disturbing activities or projects. Site-specific projects undertaken in response to direction in this revised Plan will fully comply with laws and regulations that ensure protection of heritage resources. The revised Plan includes Forestwide desired conditions, objectives, and guidelines for cultural resources to fully integrate heritage resource management with other management activities. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with this act.

Roadless Area Conservation Rule and Idaho Roadless Rule (36 CFR 294)

The Idaho Roadless Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart C) applies to inventoried roadless areas managed by the KNF, that are within the State of Idaho. This rule was promulgated in 2008 (73 FR 201). The Rule designates management theme or classifications for roadless areas in Idaho. This rule went through a separate public review and analysis process. The rule states “the prohibitions and permissions set forth in the rule are not subject to reconsideration, revision, or rescission in subsequent project decisions or land and resource management plans or revisions undertaken pursuant to 36 CFR 219” (36 CFR 294.28(e)). Therefore, the rule provides higher level management direction for roadless areas in Idaho and limits the scope of the revised Plan. The rule only provides management direction for road construction, reconstruction, timber cutting, and discretionary mineral activities. Based on this higher level direction, the revised Plan was developed to conform to the management themes and direction in the Idaho Roadless Rule for those portions of inventoried roadless areas in Idaho.

Management direction for inventoried roadless areas that are not within the state of Idaho is compliant with the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart B, published at 66 Fed Reg. 3244-3273). The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule includes a prohibition on road construction and road reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas and prohibitions on timber cutting, sale, or removal except in certain circumstances. The revised Plan is a programmatic level planning effort and does not directly authorize any road construction, reconstruction, or timber removal. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with these Rules.

Use of Off-road Vehicles on Public Lands (Executive Order 11644 as amended by Executive Order 11989)

This Executive Order addresses the use of off-road vehicles on public lands. It requires the Forest Service and other federal land management agencies to “establish polices and provide for procedures that will ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands, to promote the safety of all users of those lands, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands” (section 1). The Executive Order directs agencies to designate the “specific areas and trails on public lands on which the use of off-road vehicles may be permitted, and areas in which the use of off-road vehicles may not be permitted” (section 3).

The KNF initially met this designation requirement with the publication of travel plan maps beginning in 1977, 1978, and circa 1980, continuing with forestwide Travel/Recreation Guides in

1980 through 1983, and annual district access maps beginning in 1984 continuing through 2009. In 2009, the KNF published motor vehicle use maps (MVUM) as required by 36 CFR 212 subpart B, identifying the roads, trails and areas, by vehicle type and season of use, designated for non-winter motor vehicle use. In addition to the specific motorized recreation management reflected in the travel maps, the 1987 Plan considered off-road vehicle use per the Executive Order and the NFMA implementing regulations at 36 CFR 219.21(g) (1982 Rule) when it allocated motorized and non-motorized use in specific management areas (see additional discussion regarding management area allocations below). The KNF continues to offer district access maps for recreation planning and to display over-snow vehicle area prohibitions per the Plan allocations and subsequent site-specific decisions.

Section 8 of the Executive Order includes requirements for monitoring the effects of off-road vehicle use and adjusting designations as needed. It states: the "agency shall monitor the effects of the use of off-road vehicles on lands under their jurisdictions. On the basis of the information gathered, they shall from time to time amend or rescind designations of areas or other actions taken pursuant to this order as necessary to further the policy of this order."

The KNF monitors the effects of off-road vehicle use, and when necessary to further the policy of this order or to otherwise further the purposes for which the Forest was established, amends or rescinds motor vehicle use designations. The access and recreation section of the final EIS documents the 35-year history of managing motorized recreation on the Forest, which includes the 2001 Tri-state OHV forest plan amendment (prohibiting cross-country non-winter motor vehicle use to protect soil, watershed, wildlife, and other resources) and the 2011 Grizzly Bear Access Amendment (establishing motorized route density standards to minimize wildlife harassment).

In addition to the requirement for designating where off-road vehicles may or may not be permitted, section 3 of the Executive Order requires "that designation of such areas and trails will be based upon the protection of the resources of the public lands, promotion of the safety of all users of those lands, and minimization of conflicts among the various uses of those lands." More specifically, the regulations further require that the designation of areas and trails shall:

1. Be located to minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, or other resources of the public lands.
2. Be located to minimize harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats.
3. Be located to minimize conflicts between off-road vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same or neighboring lands, and to ensure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors.
4. Not be located in officially designated Wilderness Areas or Primitive Areas.[3]

The management area allocations in the revised Plan do identify areas "on which the use of off-road vehicles may be permitted, and areas in which the use of off-road vehicles may not be permitted." However, it is important to note that this decision is programmatic in nature. The revised Plan sets desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, guidelines, and suitability to frame and guide future forest management decisions. The management area allocations are my primary programmatic tool at the forest scale to "minimize conflicts" by identifying broad areas where motorized or non-motorized use may or may not generally be allowed.

[3] The remainder of subsection 4 concerns National Parks and other lands not found on the KNF.

The management areas where motorized use is inconsistent (unsuitable) with meeting desired conditions include standards that do not allow motor vehicle use (MAs 1a, 1b, and 4) or guidelines to not allow additional route designations (MA2 (wild) and MA3 (botanical, historical, zoological). Although the programmatic nature of the Plan only identifies management area suitability and does not prescribe site-specific activities, this ROD also authorizes a site-specific prohibition on motorized use to align current recreation uses with the Plan's desired conditions in MA 1b–Recommended Wilderness and MA 4–Research Natural Areas. (See ROD pages 5–6.)

Areas with guidelines that state motor vehicle use "may occur" or "is allowed" are considered "open" allocations (MAs 1c, 2 (scenic and recreational), 3 (geological, recreational, scenic), 5, 6, and 7) where motorized use is considered a suitable activity . However, while the use is considered suitable, the revised Plan does not mandate off-road vehicle use or indicate the area is subject to unmanaged off-road vehicle use. In fact, despite the "open" allocation, off-road motor vehicle use in these areas is constrained by site-specific motor vehicle use designations and site-specific over-snow motor vehicle prohibitions, as well as applicable Plan standards and guidelines with the intent and effect of minimizing adverse effects of that use and minimizing conflict among the various uses of those lands.

My decision makes limited adjustments to the 1987 Plan's (as amended) "closed" and "open with constraints" suitability allocations. These adjustments coincide with allocation changes for recommended wilderness and research natural areas (see pages 7–10 of this final ROD), conforming allowed uses to the management emphasis for those lands. The final EIS discloses the effects relevant to my decision on the revised Plan (see the effects analysis discussions under vegetation, watershed, wildlife, and access and recreation in chapter 3 of the final EIS). My decision to immediately conform actual uses to the allocations through certain site-specific closure orders further minimizes otherwise potential conflicts.

I considered the effects of off-road vehicle use on the Kootenai National Forest, including minimizing effects on resources of public lands, promoting safety of all users of those lands, and minimizing conflicts among the various uses of those lands. I believe those effects have been "minimized." As discussed here, on page 20–21 of this final ROD, and in the final EIS, we have been actively managing this use for over 30 years. Previous and ongoing management actions, both programmatic and site specific, have reasonably reduced and minimized the adverse effects of off-road vehicle use and conflict among the uses of the Forest. I find the final EIS for the revised Plan demonstrates continuing consideration of the minimization criteria required to protect the resources of the KNF, to promote the safety of users, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands. Therefore, the revised Plan is in compliance with this Executive Order.

Wetlands (Executive Order 11990) and Floodplains (Executive Order 11998)

These Executive Orders require Federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, short- and long-term effects resulting from the occupancy and modification of flood plains, and the modification or destruction of wetlands.

The revised Plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. The revised Plan does not create, authorize, or execute any ground-disturbing activity, although it does provide for the consideration of certain types of activities. It contains direction to ensure all site-specific projects meet or exceed State Best Management Practices. Implementation of the revised Plan is expected to contribute to protecting

soil and water, wetlands, and riparian areas to minimize effects to flood plains and wetlands. Therefore, the revised Plan is in full compliance with these orders.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

This act establishes a National Wild and Scenic Rivers System with three classes of river systems: wild, scenic, and recreational. The purpose of the act was to protect the river "…for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations" and to preserve select river's free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values.

Evaluation of the eligibility of rivers and streams for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was conducted for the preparation of the revised Plan as required by the act and Forest Service Manual policy (FSM 1924.03). In addition, management area direction in the revised Plan provides protection for the outstandingly remarkable values identified for those rivers identified as eligible. Therefore, the revised Plan is compliant with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Wilderness Act and Montana Wilderness Study Act

The Wilderness Act of 1964 established a National Wilderness Preservation System to be administered in such a manner as to leave these areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. It provides the statutory definition of wilderness and management requirements for congressionally designated areas. The Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 provides for the study of certain lands to determine their suitability for designation as wilderness in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964, and for other purposes. These areas are referred to as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).

Evaluation of existing wilderness and areas for wilderness potential was included in the environmental analysis for the revised Plan, which includes specific management area direction for the management and protection of wilderness values on the KNF as provided by the Wilderness Act and the Montana Wilderness Study Act. Therefore, the revised Plan is compliant with these Acts.

Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process (Objection Process)

The revised Plan and the draft ROD were subject to review and objection pursuant to 36 CFR 219 regulations. More than 200 individual issues were identified from the objections received and each was considered in the review. The review focused on ensuring the revised Plan meets current requirements and to determine whether changes are warranted to improve upon the analysis and decision based on the objections submitted.

The issues covered a broad range of resources and topic areas, including climate change; economics; fire and fuels management; invasive species; minerals; monitoring; multiple use management; public involvement; soils; timber production; transportation management; vegetation management, including old growth; Wild and Scenic River eligibility; recommended wilderness designation and management; and various aspects of wildlife and fisheries management. Objectors were concerned that the draft ROD did not appropriately address public interests and violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Wilderness Act, and the Wild and Scenic River Act, among others.

After a deliberative and extensive review of concerns raised by objectors involving complex regulatory and management issues, the reviewing officer responded to all the objectors in writing. He provided me with specific instructions, which I have complied with as described in appendix 1.

Implementation

The revised KNF Land Management Plan provides a framework and text to guide resource management options. It is a strategic, programmatic document and does not make project-level decisions or irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources. Those kinds of commitments would be made after more detailed, site-specific analysis, and further public comment as part of the site-specific National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

The KNF will also follow all laws, regulations, and policies that relate to managing NFS land. The revised Plan is designed to supplement, not replace, direction from these sources. The final EIS lists and considers this direction for each of the revision topics and specific resources, but the revised Plan does not repeat laws, regulations, or program management policy, practices or procedures.

The revised Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan will become effective 30 days from the date of the publication of the Notice of Availability of the final ROD in the Federal Register (per 36 CFR 219.17(a), 2012 Rule).

Project and Activity Consistency and Transition to the Revised Plan

The revised Plan direction will apply to all projects that have decisions made on or after the effective date of the final record of decision. There may be some previously approved and ongoing projects that are not consistent with the revised Plan. These projects need to remain consistent with the direction in the 1987 Plan, and are not required to meet the direction of the revised Plan. The effects of these ongoing actions were considered as a part of the baseline in developing the final EIS.

As required by NFMA and the planning rule, subject to valid existing rights, all projects and activities authorized by the Forest Service after approval of this revised Plan must be consistent with the applicable plan components (16 U.S.C. 1604(i)) as described at 36 CFR 219.15 of the 2012 Planning Rule. (Although the transition provisions at 36 CFR 219.17 of the 2012 Planning Rule allow revision of this Plan under the 1982 regulations, subsequent projects or activities approved on units with plans revised under a prior planning rule must comply with the consistency requirement at 219.15 of the current rule.)

Upon the effective date of the revised Plan, all subsequent project or activity approval documents must describe how the project or activity is consistent with the Plan by the criteria listed at 36 CFR 219.15(d) (2012 Planning Rule). Where a proposed project or activity would not be consistent with Plan direction, the responsible official has the following options (36 CFR 219.15(c) 2012 Rule):

1. Modify the proposed project or activity to make it consistent with the applicable Plan components;
2. Reject the proposal or terminate the project or activity;
3. Amend the plan so that the project or activity will be consistent with the Plan as amended;
4. Amend the Plan contemporaneously with the approval of the project or activity so that the project or activity will be consistent with the Plan as amended. This amendment may be

limited to apply only to the project or activity, and may be adopted at the same time as the approval of the project or activity (36 CFR 219.15(c)(4) 2012 Rule).

Any resource plans (for example travel management plans) developed by the Forest Service that apply to the resources or land areas within the planning area must be consistent with the Plan components. Resource plans developed prior to plan decision must be evaluated for consistency with the plan and amended if necessary (36 CFR 219.15(e) 2012 Rule).

Authorizations for occupancy and use made before the final ROD may proceed unchanged until time of reauthorization. At time of reauthorization, all permits, contracts, and other authorizing instruments must be made consistent with the revised Plan, subject to existing valid rights, as provided at §219.15(d) (2012 Rule).

Maintaining the Land Management Plan and Adapting to New Information

Adaptive Management

A land management plan is an integral part of an adaptive management cycle that guides future management decisions and actions. Adaptive management includes:

- Defining measurable management objectives;
- Monitoring management outcomes and changing circumstances; and
- Revising management strategies accordingly.

This adaptive management cycle enables the Forest to identify and respond to changing conditions, changing public desires, and new information, such as that obtained through research and scientific findings. The Forest's monitoring program is an integral part of this adaptive management cycle, consisting of monitoring questions and performance measures (see page 10–11 of this final ROD and chapter 5 of the revised Plan for additional information about the monitoring plan).

Amending the Forest Plan

A forest plan may be amended at any time based on a preliminary identification of the need to change the plan. The preliminary identification of the need to change the plan may be based on a new assessment, forest plan monitoring, or other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances. The amendment and administrative change process is described at 36 CFR 219.17(b)(2) of the 2012 Planning Rule.

Contact Person

Further information about the final EIS, revised Plan, and final ROD can be obtained from Chris Savage during normal office hours (weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) at the Kootenai National Forest Supervisor's Office (Address: Kootenai National Forest, 31374 US Highway 2, Libby, MT 59923-3022; Phone/voicemail: (406) 293-6211.

Approval

FAYE L. KRUEGER
Regional Forester
Northern Region

January 5, 2015

Appendix 1—Objection Instructions

Table 3. Pre-decisional Reviewing Official's Instructions

Instruction	Instruction Location	Response Location
County Coordination		
Ensure compliance with the requirements of 36 CFR 219.7(c) (1982) by including in the record the review of local government planning and land use policies. Further summarize that review in the final EIS. Meet with the county commissioners to discuss the compliance.	Greg Smith's letter page 6	ROD pages 29–30 Errata to the final EIS Project record documents 02352, 02353, 02354, 02355, 02704, 02866, 02874, 02875, 02876, 02877
Wild And Scenic Rivers		
Redo and appropriately document "Step 5" of the WSR eligibility assessment. Document the analysis and findings to support WSR eligibility determinations. Provide an explanation for the rationale used to make final ORV determinations for all streams, both eligible and ineligible, including all those recommended by the public for consideration. Highlight any discrepancies between the initial assessment of streams for "potential ORVs" and the final WSR eligibility inventory. Replace documentation on the existing analysis with the results of this new analysis	Greg Smith's letter page 8	ROD pages 10–11 Errata to forest plan Errata to final EIS (updated Appendix E) Project record documents 01855
Ensure WSRA eligibility is consistent across all FEIS action alternatives	Greg Smith's letter page 8	ROD page 25 Errata to the final EIS
Remove any reference to rivers on other neighboring Forests in the Region, as it should not factor into the ORV analysis. If the existence of other designated or eligible WSRs in the Region impacted it's analysis and deterred ORV findings for rivers on the forest, redo the analysis so that only river values on the Forest are considered	Attachment 2 page 16	Errata to final EIS

Instruction	Instruction Location	Response Location
Clarify the wording in the FEIS as necessary to ensure that wherever "rare, unique, or exemplary" is mentioned, it is used to describe "values," not "rivers." For example, KNF FEIS pg. 30 currently states, "The additional streams and rivers are not rare, unique, or exemplary when considered on a forest or regional basis." This sentence should be modified to state, "The additional streams and rivers do not have values that are rare, unique, or exemplary when considered on a forest or regional basis."	Attachment 2 page 16	Errata to the final EIS
Consider the American Rivers' report in the new eligibility analysis for Wild and Scenic Rivers	Attachment 2 page 17	Errata to final EIS (updated Appendix E) Project record document 01504
Recommended Wilderness And Wilderness Study Areas		
Clarify in the record referencing the "R1 Consistency Paper" to reflect that the paper is not binding policy, but instead is a reference tool used to assist Forests as they consider management options for recommended wilderness.	Greg Smith's letter page 10	Errata to the final EIS Project record document 02580
Clarify in the record how the KNF gave independent consideration to Forest-specific issues pertaining to recommended wilderness management decisions. In doing so, the KNF should provide a more detailed explanation of the nature of impacts from motorized and mechanized uses to wilderness capability and availability.	Greg Smith's letter page 10	ROD pages 21–23 Errata to the final EIS Project record document 02580
Summarize and reference in the ROD the environmental analysis supporting the site-specific decision being made. The summary should specifically address the minimization criteria described at 36 CFR 212.55. Of course, the site-specific decision to prohibit over-snow and mountain biking in recommended wilderness areas must also be supported by analysis disclosing why continuation of these uses would compromise the wilderness values of the areas recommended for wilderness.	Greg Smith's letter page 10	ROD pages 21–23, 38–40 Project record document 02577, 02580
Provide additional rationale in the record as to why the Ten Lakes study area is no longer recommended as wilderness. Specifically address what has changed since the recommendation in the 1987 Forest Plan and clarify how this decision complies with MWSA, the 2007 Settlement Agreement, and Region 1 supplemental direction to FSM 2320 (2329).	Greg Smith's Letter page 10	Decision has been modified for Ten Lakes WSA. Forest Plan will defer to the 1985 Legislative Report to Congress as described in this ROD on pages 5, 11–12, 23 Project record document 02574 and 02575

Instruction	Instruction Location	Response Location
Provide additional explanation in the record on the current condition of the old roads and harvest areas included in Whitefish Divide (i.e., how evident the improvements currently are and the current stage of regeneration), as well as the manageability reasons for including the cherry stem in recommended wilderness. With 13 percent of this recommended wilderness area consisting of a cherry stem of closed roads and associated harvest, this calls into question the overall wilderness capability of the area. Thus, further explanation would help to bolster support for KNF's determination.	Greg Smith's Letter page 18-19	Project record document 02576
Clarify the following sentence in FEIS Appendix G, p. 390: "The Roderick and Whitefish Divide recommended wilderness areas meet the criteria above and do not have forest roads or timber harvest in a significant percentage of their area." (emphasis added) Recommended wilderness should not contain any "forest roads."	Attachment 2 page 19	Errata to the final EIS Project record document 02578
Provide a more detailed response explaining why the change was made to the Scotchman Peaks' recommended wilderness boundary.	Attachment 2 page 20	Project record document 02578
Provide further explanation for the allocation of Gold Hill West IRA primarily to MA5c given the objector's reference to FEIS Appendix C's assessment that this area has high ratings for wildlife values and the terrain is difficult for cross country travel/snowmobile use is rare. See FEIS Appendix C, p. 107.	Attachment 2 page 21	Project record document 02578
Provide further explanation of the change made between the draft and final EIS. Provide more of an explanation of the manageability concerns and impacts to grizzly bear in the Tuchuck IRA.	Attachment 2 page 23	Project record document 02578
Management Indicator Species (MIS)		
Clarify in the record the linkage between population monitoring, management activities, and habitat condition for species in the landbird assemblage. Ensure the rationale is clear to explain why these species are responsive to forest activities. Document clearly the monitoring objectives for each MIS.	Greg Smith's letter page 12	Project record document 01971

Instruction	Instruction Location	Response Location
Clarify in the record that no inferences are being made that AMA monitoring is being used to draw conclusions about fish populations and distribution.	Greg Smith's letter page 12	ROD page 18 Errata to the final EIS
Summarize and reference the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forest: Providing for Ecological Sustainability in the Revised Forest Plans report in the Record of Decision how the other diversity-related requirements of the 1982 planning regulation are being met in the Revised Plan.	Greg Smith's letter page 12	ROD pages 36–37 Project record document 02542
Fire/Fuels		
Clarify that the monitoring and evaluation report will address effectiveness and movement toward desired condition.	Attachment 2 page 2	ROD pages 10–11 Project record document 01999 (Monitoring Guide)
Planning		
Review and clarify, as needed, the response to comments about the objector's statements [that "public notice and information presented to local citizens and land owners was not reasonable or forthright."]	Attachment 2 page 3	ROD pages 3–5 Errata to the final EIS
Recreation		
Summarize in the record the analysis for the site specific decision for restrictions to motorized and mechanize uses. Use citations to cross reference the analyses already found in the FEIS	Attachment 2 page 4	Project record document 02579
Review to assure that the site specific analysis addresses the minimization criteria described in the travel management regulation at 36 CFR 212.55, including user conflicts.	Attachment 2 page 4	ROD pages 21–23, 38–40 Project record document 02579
Soils		
Replace the term "managed area" in the desired condition with the term "activity area."	Attachment 2 page 5	Errata to the forest plan

Instruction	Instruction Location	Response Location
Roadless Area		
Review and clarify as needed that management actions that do not require construction of new roads will still be allowed in inventoried roadless areas as stated in the preamble of the 2001 Roadless Rule	Attachment 2 page 5	Errata to the final EIS
Timber		
Clarify in the record that the KNF is responding to an overall shift in the focus of planning and forest management throughout the agency. The wording should be changed to highlight the shift in planning emphasis rather than policy	Attachment 2 page 6	Errata to the final EIS
Vegetation		
Clarify in the record the “gaps in explanations, questionable conclusions, and apparent discrepancies” raised by the objector concerning the use of the ERG 2012 Report and its incorporation in the FEIS	Attachment 2 page 7	Project record document 02289
Modify FW-DC-VEG-03 to change or clarify the term “substantial amounts,” or provide clarification elsewhere in the Revised Plan	Attachment 2 page 8	Errata to forest plan
Clarify in the record the intent of FW-GDL-VEG-03	Attachment 2 page 9	Project record document 01680
Add the 10+ inch size class for snags to the tables displayed in FW-DC-VEG-07 and FW-GDL-VEG-04, or provide an explanation for why it is not necessary.	Attachment 2 page 10	Errata to the forest plan (FW-DC-VEG-07) Project record document 01680 (FW-GDL-VEG-04)
Delete the word “generally” from the guideline [FW-GDL-VEG-04] or modify it to state “when large diameter trees are rare across the landscape, all will be left."	Attachment 2 page 10	Errata to forest plan
Either delete the last bullet in the guideline [FW-GDL-VEG- 5] or modify it to clearly reflect a restoration objective of retaining the pattern of snag availability across the landscape to meet the diversity requirement of NFMA	Attachment 2 page 11	Errata to forest plan

Instruction	Instruction Location	Response Location
Clarify in the record that the monitoring and evaluation report will address effectiveness and movement toward desired condition.	Attachment 2 page 12	ROD pages 10–11 Project record document 01999 (Monitoring Guide)
Enhance documentation for how the invasive species program will follow program requirements and standards, including but not limited to the collection and recording of treatment efficacy. Specifically, enhance documentation to show the alignment of all program activities associated with invasive species with national policy (FSM 2900), and associated law, regulations, and the provisions of E.O. 13112 related to federal agency duties	Attachment 2 page 14	ROD pages 34–35 Errata to the final EIS Project record document 01676 and 01999 (Monitoring Guide)
Clarify in the record that the utility of tracking sites [per MON-VEG-02-01] does not apply to all invasive species infestations, but can be used in certain early detection and rapid response situations. If the utility of counting sites cannot be clarified, the reference to tracking sites should be removed	Attachment 2 page 14	Project record document 01999 (Monitoring Guide)
Clarify in the record that the Forest, through compliance with law, regulation, and policy, will take an all-taxa approach to invasive species management rather than the more narrow focus on regulated noxious weeds	Attachment 2 page 14	ROD pages 9–10 Errata to the final EIS Project record document 01676, 02469, and 01999 (Monitoring Guide)
Watershed		
Add a definition for hydrologic stability to the Revised Plan's glossary	Attachment 2 page 14	Errata to the forest plan
Wildlife and Fisheries		
Review FW-DC-WL-01 and add documentation to support the last sentence of this DC or edit this sentence to remove the unsubstantiated assumption.	Attachment 2 page 23	Project record document 02544
Review FW-GDL-WL-16 and FW-GDL-WL-21 and add documentation to support these guidelines or edit them to remove the unsubstantiated assumptions.	Attachment 2 page 24	Project record document 02558
Ensure documentation clearly supports the intent of this guideline [FW-GDL-WL-05] and make sure the guideline is clear.	Attachment 2 page 25	Project record document 02559